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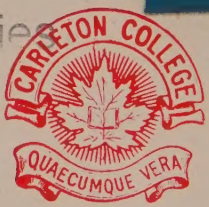

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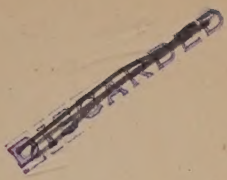
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The World's Classics

XLII

THE WORKS

OF

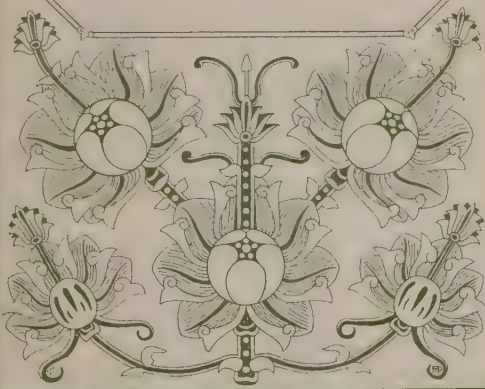
GEOFFREY CHAUCER—I

HENRY·FROWDE·OXFORD·UNIVERSITY·PRESS

THE

WORKS OF

GEOFFREY CHAUCER



LONDON·NEW YORK·AND·TORONTO

THE POETICAL WORKS

OF

GEOFFREY CHAUCER

FROM THE TEXT OF

PROFESSOR SKEAT

VOLUME I

HENRY FROWDE
OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS
LONDON, NEW YORK AND TORONTO

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THE ROMAUNT OF THE ROSE

FRAGMENT A

Many men seyn that in sweveninges
Ther nis but fables and lesinges;
But men may somme swevenes seen,
Which hardely ne false been,
But afterward ben apparaunte.
This may I drawe to waraunte
An authour, that hight Macrobes,
That halt not dremes false ne lees,
But undoth us the avisioun
That whylom mette king Cipioun.
And who-so sayth, or weneth it be
A jape, or elles a nycetee
To wene that dremes after falle,
Let who-so liste a fool me calle.
For this trowe I, and say for me,
That dremes signifiaunce be
Of good and harme to many wightes,
That dremen in her slepe a-nightes
Ful many thinges covertly,
That fallen after al openly.

The Dream

Within my twenty yere of age,
Whan that Love taketh his corage
Of yonge folk, I wente sone
To bedde, as I was wont to done,
And fast I sleep; and in sleping,

Me mette swiche a swevening,
That lykede me wonders wel;
But in that sweven is never a del
That it nis afterward befalle,
Right as this dreem wol telle us alle.
Now this dreem wol I ryme aright,
To make your hertes gaye and light;
For Love it prayeth, and also
Commaundeth me that it be so.
And if ther any aske me,
Whether that it be he or she,
How that this book the which is here
Shall hote, that I rede you here;
It is the Romance of the Rose,
In which al the art of love I close.
The mater fair is of to make;
God graunte in gree that she it take
For whom that it begonnen is!
And that is she that hath, y-wis,
So mochel prys; and ther-to she
So worthy is biloved be,
That she wel oughte, of prys and right,
Be cleped Rose of every wight.
That it was May me thoughte tho,
It is fyve yere or more ago;
That it was May, thus dremed me,
In tyme of love and jolitee,
That al thing ginneth waxen gay,
For ther is neither busk nor hay
In May, that it nil shrouded been,
And it with newe leves wreen.
These wodes eek recoveren grene,
That drye in winter been to sene;
And th' erthe wexeth proud withalle,
For swote dewes that on it falle,
And al the pore estat forget
In which that winter hadde it set;
And than bicometh the ground so proud
That it wol have a newe shroud,
And maketh so queynt his robe and fayr

That it hath hewes an hundred payr
Of gras and floures, inde and pers,
And many hewes ful dyvers:
That is the robe I mene, y-wis,
Through which the ground to preisen is.
The briddes, that han left hir song,
Whyl they han suffred cold so strong
In wedres grille, and derk to sighte,
Ben in May, for the sonne brighte,
So glade, that they shewe in singing,
That in hir herte is swich lyking,
That they mote singen and be light.
Than doth the nightingale hir might
To make noyse, and singen blythe.
Than is blisful, many a sythe,
The chelaundre and the papingay.
Than yonge folk entenden ay
For to ben gay and amorous,
The tyme is than so savorous.
Hard is his herte that loveth nought
In May, whan al this mirth is wrought;
Whan he may on these braunches here
The smale briddes singen clere
Hir blisful swete song pitous;
And in this sesoun delitous,
Whan love affrayeth alle thing,
Me thoughte a-night, in my sleping,
Right in my bed, ful redily,
That it was by the morowe erly,
And up I roos, and gan me clothe;
Anoon I wissh myn hondes bothe;
A sylvre nedle forth I drogh
Out of an aguiler queynt y-nogh,
And gan this nedle threde anon;
For out of toun me list to gon
The sowne of briddes for to here,
That on thise busshes singen clere.
And in the swete sesoun that leef is,
With a threde basting my slevis,
Aloon I wente in my playing,

The smale foules song harkning ;
That peyned hem ful many a payre
To singe on bowes blosmed fayre.
Jolif and gay, ful of gladnesse,
Toward a river I gan me dresse,
That I herde renne faste by ;
For fairer playing non saugh I
Than playen me by that riveer,
For from an hille that stood ther neer
Cam doun the streem ful stif and bold.
Cleer was the water, and as cold
As any welle is, sooth to seyne ;
And somdel lasse it was than Seine,
But it was straighter wel away.
And never saugh I, er that day,
The water that so wel lyked me ;
And wonder glad was I to see
That lusty place, and that riveer ;
And with that water that ran so cleer
My face I wissh. Tho saugh I wel
The botme paved everydel
With gravel, ful of stones shene.
The medewe softe, swote, and grene,
Beet right on the water-syde.
Ful cleer was than the morow-tyde,
And ful attempre, out of drede.
Tho gan I walke through the mede,
Dounward ay in my pleying,
The river-syde costeying.

The Garden

And whan I had a whyle goon,
I saugh a Gardin right anoon,
Ful long and brood, and everydel
Enclos it was, and walled wel,
With hye walles embatailled,
Portrayed without, and wel entailled
With many riche portraitures ;
And bothe images and peyntures
Gan I biholde bisily.

And I wol telle you, redily,
Of thilke images the semblaunce,
As fer as I have remembraunce.

HATE

A-midde saugh I HATE stonde,
That for hir wrathe, ire, and onde,
Semed to been a moveresse,
An angry wight, a chideresse;
And ful of gyle, and fel corage,
By semblaunt was that ilke image.
And she was no-thing wel arrayed,
But lyk a wood womman afrayed;
Y-frounced foule was hir visage,
And grenning for dispitous rage;
Hir nose snorted up for tene.
Ful hidous was she for to sene,
Ful foul and rusty was she, this.
Hir heed y-writhen was, y-wis,
Ful grimly with a greet towayle.

FELONYE

An image of another entayle,
A lift half, was hir faste by:
Hir name above hir heed saugh I,
And she was called FELONYE.

VILANYE

Another image, that VILANYE
Y-cleped was, saugh I and fond
Upon the walle on hir right hond.
Vilanye was lyk somdel
That other image; and, trusteth wel,
She semed a wikked creature.
By countenaunce, in portrayture,
She semed be ful despitous,
And eek ful proud and outrageous.
Wel coude he peynte, I undertake,
That swiche image coude make.
Ful foul and cherlish semed she,

And eek vilaynous for to be,
And litel coude of norture,
To worshipe any creature.

Coveityse

And next was peynted Coveityse,
That eggeth folk, in many gyse,
To take and yeve right nought ageyn,
And grete tresours up to leyn.
And that is she that for usure
Leneth to many a creature
The lasse for the more winning,
So coveitous is her brenning.
And that is she, for penyes fele,
That techeth for to robbe and stele
These theves, and these smale harlotes ;
And that is routhe, for by hir throtes
Ful many oon hangeth at the laste.
She maketh folk compasse and caste
To taken other folkes thing,
Through robberie, or miscounting.
And that is she that maketh trechoures ;
And she that maketh false pledoures,
That with hir termes and hir domes
Doon maydens, children, and eek gromes
Hir heritage to forgo.
Ful croked were hir hondes two ;
For Coveityse is ever wood
To grypen other folkes good.
Coveityse, for hir winning,
Ful leef hath other mennes thing.

Avarice

Another image set saugh I
Next Coveityse faste by,
And she was cleped Avarice.
Ful foul in peynting was that vice ;
Ful sad and caytif was she eek,
And al-so grene as any leek.

So yvel hewed was hir colour,
Hir semed have lived in langour.
She was lyk thing for hungre deed,
That ladde hir lyf only by breed
Kneden with eisel strong and egre;
And therto she was lene and megre.
And she was clad ful povrely,
Al in an old torn courtepy,
As she were al with dogges torn;
And bothe bihinde and eek biforn
Clouted was she beggarly.
A mantel heng hir faste by,
Upon a perche, weyke and smalle;
A burnet cote heng therwithalle,
Furred with no menivere,
But with a furre rough of here,
Of lambe-skinnes hevy and blake;
It was ful old, I undertake.
For Avarice to clothe hir wel
Ne hasteth hir, never a del;
For certeynly it were hir loth
To weren ofte that ilke cloth;
And if it were forwered, she
Wolde have ful greet necessitee
Of clothing, er she boughte hir newe,
Al were it bad of wolle and hewe.
This Avarice held in hir hande
A purs, that heng doun by a bande;
And that she hidde and bond so stronge,
Men must abyde wonder longe
Out of that purs er ther come ought,
For that ne cometh not in hir thought;
It was not, certein, hir entente
That fro that purs a peny wente.

ENVYE

And by that image, nygh y-nough,
Was peynt ENVYE, that never lough,
Nor never wel in herte ferde
But-if she outher saugh or herde

Som greet mischaunce, or greet disese.
No-thing may so moch hir plese
As mischef and misaventure;
Or whan she seeth discomfiture
On any worthy man to falle,
Than lyketh hir ful wel withalle.
She is ful glad in hir corage,
If she see any greet linage
Be brought to nought in shamful wyse.
And if a man in honour ryse,
Or by his witte, or by prowesse,
Of that hath she gret hevinesse;
For, trusteth wel, she goth nigh wood
When any chaunce happeth good.
Envye is of swich crueltee,
That feith ne trouthe holdeth she
To freend ne felawe, bad or good.
Ne she hath kin noon of hir blood,
That she nis ful hir enemy;
She nolde, I dar seyn hardely,
Hir owne fader ferde wel.
And sore abyeth she everydel
Hir malice, and hir maltalent:
For she is in so greet turment
And hath such wo, whan folk doth good,
That nigh she melteth for pure wood;
Hir herte kerveth and to-breketh
That god the peple wel awreketh.
Envye, y-wis, shal never lette
Som blame upon the folk to sette.
I trowe that if Envye, y-wis,
Knewe the beste man that is
On this syde or biyond the see,
Yit somwhat lakken him wolde she.
And if he were so hende and wys,
That she ne mighte al abate his prys,
Yit wolde she blame his worthinesse,
Or by hir wordes make it lesse.
I saugh Envye, in that peynting,
Hadde a wonderful loking;

For she ne loked but awry,
Or overthwart, al baggingly.
And she hadde eek a foul usage ;
She mighte loke in no visage
Of man or womman forth-right pleyn,
But shette oon yë for disdeyn ;
So for envye brenned she
Whan she mighte any man y-see,
That fair, or worthy were, or wys,
Or elles stood in folkes prys.

Sorowe

Sorowe was peynted next Envye
Upon that walle of masonrye.
But wel was seen in hir colour
That she hadde lived in langour ;
Hir semed havë the Jaunyce.
Nought half so pale was Avaryce,
Nor no-thing lyk, as of lenesse ;
For sorowe, thought, and greet distresse,
That she hadde suffred day and night
Made hir ful yelwe, and no-thing bright,
Ful fade, pale, and megre also.
Was never wight yit half so wo
As that hir semed for to be,
Nor so fulfilled of ire as she.
I trowe that no wight mighte hir plese,
Nor do that thing that mighte hir ese ;
Nor she ne wolde hir sorowe slake,
Nor comfort noon unto hir take ;
So depe was hir wo bigonnen,
And eek hir herte in angre ronnen,
A sorowful thing wel semed she.
Nor she hadde no-thing slowe be
For to forcracchen al hir face,
And for to rende in many place
Hir clothes, and for to tere hir swire,
And she that was fulfilled of ire ;
And al to-torn lay eek hir here
Aboute hir shuldres, here and there,

As she that hadde it al to-rent
For angre and for maltalent.
And eek I telle you certeynly
How that she weep ful tenderly.
In world nis wight so hard of herte
That hadde seen hir sorowes smerte,
That nolde have had of hir pitee,
So wo-bigoon a thing was she.
She al to-dasshte hir-self for wo,
And smoot togider hir handes two.
To sorwe was she ful ententyf,
That woful recchelees caityf;
Hir roughte litel of pleying,
Or of clipping or of kissing;
For who-so sorweful is in herte
Him liste not to pleye ne sterte,
Nor for to daunsen, ne to singe,
Ne may his herte in temper bringe
To make joye on even or morowe;
For joye is contraire unto sorowe.

ELDE

ELDE was peynted after this,
That shorter was a foot, y-wis,
Than she was wont in her yonghede.
Unnethe hir-self she mighte fede;
So feble and eek so old was she
That faded was al hir beautee.
Ful salowe was waxen hir colour,
Hir heed for-hoor was, whyt as flour.
Y-wis, gret qualm ne were it noon,
Ne sinne, although hir lyf were gon.
Al woxen was hir body unwelde,
And drye, and dwyned al for elde.
A foul forwelked thing was she
That whylom round and softe had be.
Hir eres shoken fast withalle,
As from her heed they wolde falle.
Hir face frounced and forpyned,
And bothe hir hondes lorn, fordwyned.

So old she was that she ne wente
A foot, but it were by potente.

Time

The Tyme, that passeth night and day,
And restelees travayleth ay,
And steleth from us so prively,
That to us semeth sikerly
That it in oon point dwelleth ever,
And certes, it ne resteth never,
But goth so faste, and passeth ay,
That ther nis man that thinke may
What tyme that now present is:
Asketh at these clerkes this;
For er men thinke it redily,
Three tymes been y-passed by.
The tyme, that may not sojourne,
But goth, and never may retourne,
As water that doun renneth ay,
But never drope retourne may;
Ther may no-thing as tyme endure,
Metal, nor erthely creature;
For alle thing it fret, and shal:
The tyme eek, that chaungeth al,
And al doth waxe and fostred be,
And alle thing distroyeth he:
The tyme, that eldeth our auncessours
And eldeth kinges and emperours,
And that us alle shal overcomen
Er that deeth us shal have nomen:
The tyme, that hath al in welde
To elden folk, had maad hir elde
So inly, that, to my witing,
She mighte helpe hir-self no-thing,
But turned ageyn unto childhede;
She had no-thing hir-self to lede,
Ne wit ne pith inwith hir holde
More than a child of two yeer olde.
But natheles, I trowe that she
Was fair sumtyme, and fresh to see,

Whan she was in hir rightful age:
But she was past al that passage
And was a doted thing bicomen.
A furred cope on had she nomen;
Wel had she clad hir-self and warm,
For cold mighte elles doon hir harm.
These olde folk have alwey colde,
Hir kind is swiche, whan they ben olde.

Pope-holy

Another thing was doon ther write,
That semede lyk an ipocrite,
And it was cleped Pope-holy.
That ilke is she that prively
Ne spareth never a wikked dede,
Whan men of hir taken non hede;
And maketh hir outward precious,
With pale visage and pitous,
And semeth a simple creature;
But ther nis no misaventure
That she ne thenketh in hir corage.
Ful lyk to hir was that image,
That maked was lyk hir semblaunce.
She was ful simple of countenance,
And she was clothed and eek shod,
As she were, for the love of god,
Yolden to religioun,
Swich semed hir devocioun.
A sauter held she faste in honde,
And bisily she gan to fonde
To make many a feynt prayere
To god, and to his seyntes dere.
Ne she was gay, fresh, ne jolyf,
But semed be ful ententyf
To gode werkes, and to faire,
And therto she had on an haire.
Ne certes, she was fat no-thing,
But semed wery for fasting;
Of colour pale and deed was she.
From hir the gate shal werned be

Of paradys, that blisful place ;
For swich folk maketh lene hir face,
As Crist seith in his evangyle,
To gete hem prys in toun a whyle ;
And for a litel glorie veine
They lesen god and eek his reine.

POVERT

And alderlast of everichoon,
Was peynted POVERT al aloon,
That not a peny hadde in wolde,
Al-though that she hir clothes solde,
And though she shulde anhonged be ;
For naked as a worm was she.
And if the weder stormy were,
For colde she shulde have deyed there.
She nadde on but a streit old sak,
And many a clout on it ther stak ;
This was hir cote and hir mantel,
No more was there, never a del,
To clothe her with ; I undertake,
Gret leyser hadde she to quake.
And she was put, that I of talke,
Fer fro these other, up in an halke ;
There lurked and there coured she ;
For povre thing, wher-so it be,
Is shamfast, and despysed ay.
Acursed may wel be that day,
That povre man conceyved is ;
For god wot, al to selde, y-wis,
Is any povre man wel fed,
Or wel arayed or y-cled,
Or wel biloved, in swich wyse
In honour that he may aryse.
Alle these thinges, wel avysed,
As I have you er this devysed,
With gold and asure over alle
Depeynted were upon the walle.
Squar was the wal, and high somdel ;
Enclosed, and y-barred wel,

In stede of hegge, was that gardin ;
Com never shepherde therin.
Into that gardyn, wel y-wrought,
Who-so that me coude have brought,
By laddre, or elles by degree,
It wolde wel have lyked me.
For swich solace, swich joye, and play,
I trowe that never man ne say,
As in that place delitous.
The gardin was not daungerous
To herberwe briddes many oon.
So riche a yerd was never noon
Of briddes songe, and braunches grene.
Therin were briddes mo, I wene,
Than been in alle the rewme of Fraunce.
Ful blisful was the accordaunce
Of swete and pitous songe they made,
For al this world it oughte glade.
And I my-self so mery ferde,
Whan I hir blisful songes herde,
That for an hundred pound nolde I,—
If that the passage openly
Hadde been unto me free—
That I nolde entren for to see
Thassemblee, god it kepe and were !
Of briddes, whiche therinne were,
That songen, through hir mery throtes,
Daunces of love, and mery notes.
Whan I thus herde foules singe,
I fel faste in a weymentinge,
By which art, or by what engyn
I mighte come in that gardyn ;
But way I couthe finde noon
Into that gardin for to goon.
Ne nought wiste I if that ther were
Eyther hole or place o-where,
By which I mighte have entree ;
Ne ther was noon to teche me ;
For I was al aloon, y-wis,
Ful wo and anguissous of this.

Til atte last bithoughte I me,
That by no weye ne mighte it be;
That ther nas laddre or wey to passe,
Or hole, into so fair a place.
Tho gan I go a ful gret pas
Envyroning even in compas
The closing of the square wal,
Til that I fond a wiket smal
So shet, that I ne mighte in goon,
And other entree was ther noon.

THE DOOR

Upon this dore I gan to smyte,
That was so fetys and so lyte;
For other wey coude I not seke.
Ful long I shoof, and knokked eke,
And stood ful long and oft herkning
If that I herde a wight coming;
Til that the dore of thilke entree
A mayden curteys opened me.

YDELNESSE

Hir heer was as yelowe of hewe
As any basin scoured newe.
Hir flesh as tendre as is a chike,
With bente browes, smothe and slike;
And by mesure large were
The opening of hir yën clere.
Hir nose of good proporcioun,
Hir yën greye as a faucoun,
With swete breeth and wel savoured.
Hir face whyt and wel coloured,
With litel mouth, and round to see;
A clove chin eek hadde she.
Hir nekke was of good fasoun
In lengthe and gretnesse, by resoun,
Withoute bleyne, scabbe, or royne.
Fro Jerusalem into Burgoyne
Ther nis a fairer nekke, y-wis,
To fele how smothe and softe it is.

Hir throte, al-so whyt of hewe
As snow on braunche snowed newe.
Of body ful wel wrought was she ;
Men neded not, in no cuntree,
A fairer body for to seke.
And of fyn orfrays had she eke
A chapelet : so semly oon
Ne wered never mayde upon ; . . . .
And faire above that chapelet
A rose gerland had she set.
She hadde in honde a gay mirour,
And with a riche gold tressour
Hir heed was tressed queyntely ;
Hir sleves sewed fetisly.
And for to kepe hir hondes faire
Of gloves whyte she hadde a paire.
And she hadde on a cote of grene
Of cloth of Gaunt ; withouten wene,
Wel semed by hir apparayle
She was not wont to greet travayle.
For whan she kempt was fetisly,
And wel arayed and richely,
Thanne had she doon al hir journee ;
For mery and wel bigoon was she.
She ladde a lusty lyf in May,
She hadde no thought, by night ne day,
Of no-thing, but it were oonly
To graythe hir wel and uncouthly.
Whan that this dore hadde opened me
This mayden, semely for to see,
I thanked hir as I best mighte,
And axede hir how that she highte,
And what she was, I axede eke.
And she to me was nought unmeke,
Ne of hir answer daungerous,
But faire answerde, and seide thus :—
'Lo, sir, my name is Ydelnesse ;
So clepe men me, more and lesse.
Ful mighty and ful riche am I,
And that of oon thing, namely ;

For I entende to no-thing
But to my joye, and my pleying,
And for to kembe and tresse me.
Aqueynted am I, and privee
With Mirthe, lord of this gardyn,
That fro the lande Alexandryn
Made the trees be hider fet,
That in this gardin been y-set.
And when the trees were woxen on highte,
This wal, that stant here in thy sighte,
Dide Mirthe enclosen al aboute;
And these images, al withoute,
He dide hem bothe entaile and peynte,
That neither ben jolyf ne queynte,
But they ben ful of sorowe and wo,
As thou hast seen a whyle ago.
'And ofte tyme, him to solace,
Sir Mirthe cometh into this place,
And eek with him cometh his meynee,
That liven in lust and jolitee.
And now is Mirthe therin, to here
The briddes, how they singen clere,
The mavis and the nightingale,
And other joly briddes smale.
And thus he walketh to solace
Him and his folk; for swetter place
To pleyen in he may not finde,
Although he soughte oon in-til Inde.
The alther-fairest folk to see
That in this world may founde be
Hath Mirthe with him in his route,
That folowen him alwayes aboute.'
When Ydelnesse had told al this,
And I hadde herkned wel, y-wis,
Than seide I to dame Ydelnesse,
'Now al-so wisly god me blesse,
Sith Mirthe, that is so fair and free,
Is in this yerde with his meynee,
Fro thilke assemblee, if I may,
Shal no man werne me to-day,

That I this night ne mote it see.
For, wel wene I, ther with him be
A fair and joly companye
Fulfilled of alle curtesye.'
And forth, without wordes mo,
In at the wiket wente I tho,
That Ydelnesse hadde opened me,
Into that gardin fair to see.

The Garden

And whan I was therin, y-wis,
Myn herte was ful glad of this.
For wel wende I ful sikerly
Have been in paradys erthely;
So fair it was, that, trusteth wel,
It semed a place espirituel.
For certes, as at my devys,
Ther is no place in paradys
So good in for to dwelle or be
As in that Gardin, thoughte me;
For there was many a brid singing,
Throughout the yerde al thringing.
In many places were nightingales,
Alpes, finches, and wodewales,
That in her swete song delyten
In thilke place as they habyten.
Ther mighte men see many flokkes
Of turtles and of laverokkes.
Chalaundres fele saw I there,
That wery, nigh forsongen were.
And thrustles, terins, and mavys,
That songen for to winne hem prys,
And eek to sormounte in hir song
These other briddes hem among.
By note made fair servyse
These briddes, that I you devyse;
They songe hir song as faire and wel
As angels doon espirituel.
And, trusteth wel, whan I hem herde,
Full lustily and wel I ferde;

For never yit swich melodye
Was herd of man that mighte dye.
Swich swete song was hem among,
That me thoughte it no briddes song,
But it was wonder lyk to be
Song of mermaydens of the see;
That, for her singing is so clere,
Though we mermaydens clepe hem here
In English, as in our usaunce,
Men clepen hem sereyns in Fraunce.
Ententif weren for to singe
These briddes that nought unkunninge
Were of hir craft, and apprentys,
But of hir song sotyl and wys.
And certes, whan I herde hir song,
And saw the grene place among,
In herte I wex so wonder gay,
That I was never erst, er that day,
So jolyf, nor so wel bigo,
Ne mery in herte, as I was tho.
And than wiste I, and saw ful wel,
That Ydelnesse me served wel,
That me putte in swich jolitee.
Hir freend wel oughte I for to be,
Sith she the dore of that gardyn
Hadde opened, and me leten in.
From hennesforth how that I wroughte,
I shal you tellen, as me thoughte.
First, whereof Mirthe served there,
And eek what folk ther with him were,
Withoute fable I wol descryve.
And of that gardin eek as blyve
I wol you tellen after this.
The faire fasoun al, y-wis,
That wel y-wrought was for the nones,
I may not telle you al at ones:
But as I may and can, I shal
By ordre tellen you it al.
Ful fair servyse and eek ful swete
These briddes maden as they sete.

Layes of love, ful wel sowning
They songen in hir jargoning;
Summe highe and summe eek lowe songe
Upon the braunches grene y-sprunge.
The sweetnesse of hir melodye
Made al myn herte in reverdye.
And whan that I hadde herd, I trowe,
These briddes singing on a rowe,
Than mighte I not withholde me
That I ne wente in for to see
Sir Mirthe; for my desiring
Was him to seen, over alle thing,
His countenaunce and his manere:
That sighte was to me ful dere.

SIR MIRTHE

Tho wente I forth on my right hond
Doun by a litel path I fond
Of mentes ful, and fenel grene;
And faste by, withoute wene,
SIR MIRTHE I fond; and right anoon
Unto sir Mirthe gan I goon,
Ther-as he was, him to solace.
And with him, in that lusty place,
So fair folk and so fresh hadde he,
That whan I saw, I wondred me
Fro whennes swich folk mighte come,
So faire they weren, alle and some;
For they were lyk, as to my sighte,
To angels, that ben fethered brighte.

GLADNESSE

This folk, of which I telle you so,
Upon a carole wenten tho.
A lady caroled hem, that highte
GLADNESSE, the blisful, the lighte;
Wel coude she singe and lustily,
Non half so wel and semely,
And make in song swich refreininge,
It sat hir wonder wel to singe.

Hir vois ful cleer was and ful swete.
She was nought rude ne unmete,
But couthe y-now of swich doing
As longeth unto caroling:
For she was wont in every place
To singen first, folk to solace;
For singing most she gaf hir to;
No craft had she so leef to do.
Tho mightest thou caroles seen,
And folk ther daunce and mery been,
And make many a fair tourning
Upon the grene gras springing.
Ther mightest thou see these floutours,
Minstrales, and eek jogelours,
That wel to singe dide hir peyne.
Somme songe songes of Loreyne;
For in Loreyne hir notes be
Ful swetter than in this contree.
Ther was many a timbestere,
And saylours, that I dar wel swere
Couthe hir craft ful parfitly.
The timbres up ful sotilly
They caste, and henten hem ful ofte
Upon a finger faire and softe,
That they ne fayled never-mo.
Ful fetis damiselles two,
Right yonge, and fulle of semlihede,
In kirtles, and non other wede,
And faire tressed every tresse,
Had Mirthe doon, for his noblesse,
Amidde the carole for to daunce;
But her-of lyth no remembraunce,
How that they daunced queyntely.
That oon wolde come al prively
Agayn that other: and whan they were
Togidre almost, they threwe y-fere
Hir mouthes so, that through hir play
It semed as they kiste alway;
To dauncen wel coude they the gyse;
What shulde I more to you devyse?

Ne bede I never thennes go,
Whyles that I saw hem daunce so.

Curtesye

Upon the carole wonder faste
I gan biholde; til atte laste
A lady gan me for to espye,
And she was cleped Curtesye,
The worshipful, the debonaire;
I pray god ever falle hir faire!
Ful curteisly she called me,
'What do ye there, beau sire?' quod she,
'Come neer, and if it lyke yow
To dauncen, daunceth with us now.'
And I, withoute tarying,
Wente into the caroling.
I was abasshed never a del,
But it me lykede right wel
That Curtesye me cleped so,
And bad me on the daunce go.
For if I hadde durst, certeyn
I wolde have caroled right fayn,
As man that was to daunce blythe.
Than gan I loken ofte sythe
The shap, the bodies, and the cheres,
The countenaunce and the maneres
Of alle the folk that daunced there,
And I shal telle what they were.

Mirthe

Ful fair was Mirthe, ful long and high;
A fairer man I never sigh.
As round as appel was his face,
Ful rody and whyt in every place.
Fetys he was and wel beseye,
With metely mouth and yën greye;
His nose by mesure wrought ful right;
Crisp was his heer, and eek ful bright.
His shuldres of a large brede,
And smalish in the girdilstede.

He semed lyk a portreiture,
So noble he was of his stature,
So fair, so joly, and so fetys,
With limes wrought at poynt devys,
Deliver, smert, and of gret might;
Ne sawe thou never man so light.
Of berde unnethe hadde he no-thing,
For it was in the firste spring.
Ful yong he was, and mery of thought,
And in samyt, with briddes wrought,
And with gold beten fetisly,
His body was clad ful richely.
Wrought was his robe in straunge gyse,
And al to-slitered for queyntyse
In many a place, lowe and hye.
And shod he was with greet maistrye,
With shoon decoped, and with laas
By druerye, and by solas,
His leef a rosen chapelet
Had maad, and on his heed it set.
And wite ye who was his leef?

GLADNESSE

Dame GLADNES ther was him so leef,
That singeth so wel with glad corage,
That from she was twelve yeer of age,
She of hir love graunt him made.
Sir Mirthe hir by the finger hadde
In daunsing, and she him also;
Gret love was atwixe hem two.
Bothe were they faire and brighte of hewe;
She semede lyk a rose newe
Of colour, and hir flesh so tendre,
That with a brere smale and slendre
Men mighte it cleve, I dar wel sayn.
Hir forheed, frounceles al playn.
Bente were hir browes two,
Hir yën greye, and gladde also,
That laughede ay in hir semblaunt,
First or the mouth, by covenaunt.

I noot what of hir nose descryve ;
So fair hath no womman alyve . . . .
Hir heer was yelowe, and cleer shyning,
I wot no lady so lyking.
Of orfrays fresh was hir gerland ;
I, whiche seen have a thousand,
Saugh never, y-wis, no gerlond yit,
So wel y-wrought of silk as it.
And in an over-gilt samyt
Clad she was, by gret delyt.
Of which hir leef a robe werde,
The myrier she in herte ferde.

CUPIDE

And next hir wente, on hir other syde,
The god of Love, that can devyde
Love, as him lyketh it to be.
But he can cherles daunten, he,
And maken folkes pryde fallen.
And he can wel these lordes thrallen,
And ladies putte at lowe degree,
Whan he may hem to proude see.
This God of Love of his fasoun
Was lyk no knave, ne quistroun ;
His beautee gretly was to pryse.
But of his robe to devyse
I drede encombred for to be.
For nought y-clad in silk was he,
But al in floures and flourettes,
Y-painted al with amorettes ;
And with losenges and scochouns,
With briddes, libardes, and lyouns,
And other beestes wrought ful wel.
His garnement was everydel
Y-portreyd and y-wrought with floures,
By dyvers medling of coloures.
Floures ther were of many gyse
Y-set by compas in assyse ;
Ther lakked no flour, to my dome,
Ne nought so muche as flour of brome,

Ne violete, no eek pervenke,
Ne flour non, that man can on thenke;
And many a rose-leef ful long
Was entermedled ther-among:
And also on his heed was set
Of roses rede a chapelet.
But nightingales, a ful gret route,
That flyen over his heed aboute,
The leves felden as they flyen;
And he was al with briddes wryen,
With popinjay, with nightingale,
With chalaundre, and with wodewale,
With finch, with lark, and with archaungel.
He semede as he were an aungel
That doun were comen fro hevene clere.

SWETE-LOKING

Love hadde with him a bachelere,
That he made alweyes with him be;
SWETE-LOKING cleped was he.
This bachelere stood biholding
The daunce, and in his honde holding
Turke bowes two hadde he.
That oon of hem was of a tree
That bereth a fruyt of savour wikke;
Ful croked was that foule stikke,
And knotty here and there also,
And blak as bery, or any slo.
That other bowe was of a plante
Without wem, I dar warante,
Ful even, and by proporcioun
Tretys and long, of good fasoun.
And it was peynted wel and thwiten,
And over-al diapred and writen
With ladies and with bacheleres,
Ful lightsom and ful glad of cheres.
These bowes two held Swete-Loking,
That semed lyk no gadeling.
And ten brode arowes held he there,
Of which five in his right hond were.

But they were shaven wel and dight,
Nokked and fethered a-right;
And al they were with gold bigoon,
And stronge poynted everichoon,
And sharpe for to kerven weel.
But iren was ther noon ne steel;
For al was gold, men mighte it see,
Out-take the fetheres and the tree.

Beautee

The swiftest of these arowes fyve
Out of a bowe for to dryve,
And best y-fethered for to flee,
And fairest eek, was cleped Beautee.

Simplesse

That other arowe, that hurteth lesse,
Was cleped, as I trowe, Simplesse.

Fraunchyse

The thridde cleped was Fraunchyse,
That fethered was, in noble wyse,
With valour and with curtesye.

Companye

The fourthe was cleped Companye,
That hevy for to sheten is;
But who-so sheteth right, y-wis,
May therwith doon gret harm and wo.

Fair-Semblaunt

The fifte of these, and laste also,
Fair-Semblaunt men that arowe calle,
The leeste grevous of hem alle;
Yit can it make a ful gret wounde,
But he may hope his sores sounde,
That hurt is with that arowe, y-wis;
His wo the bet bistowed is.
For he may soner have gladnesse,
His langour oughte be the lesse.

Fyve arowes were of other gyse,
That been ful foule to devyse;
For shaft and ende, sooth to telle,
Were al-so blak as feend in helle.

PRYDE

The first of hem is called PRYDE;

VILANYE

That other arowe next him bisyde,
It was y-cleped VILANYE;
That arowe was as with felonye
Envenimed, and with spitous blame.

SHAME

The thridde of hem was cleped SHAME.

WANHOPE

The fourthe, WANHOPE cleped is,

NEWE-THOUGHT

The fifte, the NEWE-THOUGHT, y-wis.
These arowes that I speke of here,
Were alle fyve of oon manere,
And alle were they resemblable.
To hem was wel sitting and able
The foule croked bowe hidous,
That knotty was, and al roynous.
That bowe semede wel to shete
These arowes fyve, that been unmete,
Contrarie to that other fyve.
But though I telle not as blyve
Of hir power, ne of hir might,
Her-after shal I tellen right
The sothe, and eek signifiaunce,
As fer as I have remembraunce:
Al shal be seid, I undertake,
Er of this boke an ende I make.
Now come I to my tale ageyn.
But alderfirst, I wol you seyn

The fasoun and the countenaunces
Of al the folk that on the daunce is.
The God of Love, jolyf and light,
Ladde on his honde a lady bright,
Of high prys, and of greet degree.

BEAUTEE

This lady called was BEAUTEE,
As was an arowe, of which I tolde.
Ful wel y-thewed was she holde;
Ne she was derk ne broun, but bright,
And cleer as is the mone-light,
Ageyn whom alle the sterres semen
But smale candels, as we demen.
Hir flesh was tendre as dewe of flour,
Hir chere was simple as byrde in bour;
As whyt as lilie or rose in rys
Hir face, gentil and tretys.
Fetys she was, and smal to see;
No windred browes hadde she,
Ne popped hir, for it neded nought
To windre hir, or to peynte hir ought.
Hir tresses yelowe and longe straughten,
Unto hir heles doun they raughten:
Hir nose, hir mouth, and eye and cheke
Wel wrought, and al the remenaunt eke.
A ful gret savour and a swote
Me thinketh in myn herte rote,
As helpe me god, whan I remembre
Of the fasoun of every membre!
In world is noon so fair a wight;
For yong she was, and hewed bright,
Wys, plesaunt, and fetys withalle,
Gente, and in hir middel smalle.

RICHESSE

Bisyde Beaute yede RICHESSE,
An high lady of greet noblesse,
And greet of prys in every place.
But who-so durste to hir trespace,

Or til hir folk, in worde or dede,
He were ful hardy, out of drede;
For bothe she helpe and hindre may:
And that is nought of yisterday
That riche folk have ful gret might
To helpe, and eek to greve a wight.
The beste and grettest of valour
Diden Richesse ful gret honour,
And besy weren hir to serve;
For that they wolde hir love deserve,
They cleped hir 'Lady,' grete and smalle;
This wyde world hir dredeth alle;
This world is al in hir daungere.
Hir court hath many a losengere,
And many a traytour envious,
That been ful besy and curious
For to dispreisen, and to blame
That best deserven love and name.
Bifore the folk, hem to bigylen,
These losengeres hem preyse, and smylen,
And thus the world with word anoynten;
But afterward they prikke and poynten
The folk right to the bare boon,
Bihinde her bak whan they ben goon,
And foule abate the folkes prys.
Ful many a worthy man and wys,
An hundred, have they don to dye,
These losengeres, through flaterye;
And maketh folk ful straunge be,
Ther-as hem oughte be prive.
Wel yvel mote they thryve and thee,
And yvel aryved mote they be,
These losengeres, ful of envye!
No good man loveth hir companye.
Richesse a robe of purpre on hadde,
Ne trowe not that I lye or madde;
For in this world is noon it liche,
Ne by a thousand deel so riche,
Ne noon so fair; for it ful wel
With orfrays leyd was everydel,

And portrayed in the ribaninges
Of dukes stories, and of kinges.
And with a bend of gold tasseled,
And knoppes fyne of gold ameled.
Aboute hir nekke of gentil entaile
Was shet the riche chevesaile,
In which ther was ful gret plentee
Of stones clere and bright to see.
Rychesse a girdel hadde upon,
The bokel of it was of a stoon
Of vertu greet, and mochel of might;
For who-so bar the stoon so bright,
Of venim thurte him no-thing doute,
While he the stoon hadde him aboute.
That stoon was greetly for to love,
And til a riche mannes bihove
Worth al the gold in Rome and Fryse.
The mourdaunt, wrought in noble wyse,
Was of a stoon ful precious,
That was so fyn and vertuous,
That hool a man it coude make
Of palasye, and of tooth-ake.
And yit the stoon hadde suche a grace,
That he was siker in every place,
Al thilke day, not blind to been,
That fasting mighte that stoon seen.
The barres were of gold ful fyne,
Upon a tissu of satyne,
Ful hevy, greet, and no-thing light,
In everich was a besaunt-wight.
Upon the tresses of Richesse
Was set a cercle, for noblesse,
Of brend gold, that ful lighte shoon;
So fair, trowe I, was never noon.
But he were cunning, for the nones,
That coude devysen alle the stones
That in that cercle shewen clere;
It is a wonder thing to here.
For no man coude preyse or gesse
Of hem the valewe or richesse.

Rubyes there were, saphyres, jagounces,
And emeraudes, more than two ounces.
But al bifore, ful sotilly,
A fyn carboucle set saugh I.
The stoon so cleer was and so bright,
That, al-so sone as it was night,
Men mighte seen to go, for nede,
A myle or two, in lengthe and brede.
Swich light tho sprang out of the stoon,
That Richesse wonder brighte shoon,
Bothe hir heed, and al hir face,
And eke aboute hir al the place.
Dame Richesse on hir hond gan lede
A yong man ful of semelihede,
That she best loved of any thing;
His lust was muche in housholding.
In clothing was he ful fetys,
And lovede wel have hors of prys.
He wende to have reproved be
Of thefte or mordre, if that he
Hadde in his stable an hakeney.
And therfore he desyred ay
To been aqueynted with Richesse;
For al his purpos, as I gesse,
Was for to make greet dispense,
Withoute werning or defence.
And Richesse might it wel sustene,
And hir dispenses wel mayntene,
And him alwey swich plentee sende
Of golde and silver for to spende
Withoute lakking or daungere,
As it were poured in a garnere.

LARGESSE

And after on the daunce wente
LARGESSE, that sette al hir entente
For to be honourable and free;
Of Alexandres kin was she;
Hir moste joye was, y-wis,
Whan that she yaf, and seide 'have this.'

Not Avarice, the foule captyf,
Was half to grype so ententyf,
As Largesse is to yeve and spende.
And god y-nough alwey hir sende,
So that the more she yaf awey,
The more, y-wis, she hadde alwey.
Gret loos hath Largesse, and gret prys;
For bothe wys folk and unwys
Were hoolly to hir baundon brought,
So wel with yiftes hath she wrought.
And if she hadde an enemy,
I trowe, that she coude craftily
Make him ful sone hir freend to be,
So large of yift and free was she;
Therfore she stood in love and grace
Of riche and povre in every place.
A ful gret fool is he, y-wis,
That bothe riche and nigard is.
A lord may have no maner vice
That greveth more than avarice.
For nigard never with strengthe of hond
May winne him greet lordship or lond.
For freendes al to fewe hath he
To doon his wil perfourmed be.
And who-so wol have freendes here,
He may not holde his tresour dere.
For by ensample I telle this,
Right as an adamaunt, y-wis,
Can drawen to him sotilly
The yren, that is leyd thereby,
So draweth folkes hertes, y-wis,
Silver and gold that yeven is.
Largesse hadde on a robe fresshe
Of riche purpur Sarsinesshe.
Wel fourmed was hir face and clere,
And opened had she hir colere;
For she right there hadde in present
Unto a lady maad present
Of a gold broche, ful wel wrought.
And certes, it missat hir nought;

For through hir smokke, wrought with silk,
The flesh was seen, as whyt as milk.
Largesse, that worthy was and wys,
Held by the honde a knight of prys,
Was sib to Arthour of Bretaigne.
And that was he that bar the enseigne
Of worship, and the gonfanoun.
And yit he is of swich renoun,
That men of him seye faire thinges
Bifore barouns, erles, and kinges.
This knight was comen al newely
Fro tourneyinge faste by;
Ther hadde he doon gret chivalrye
Through his vertu and his maistrye;
And for the love of his lemman
Had cast doun many a doughty man.

FRAUNCHYSE

And next him daunced dame FRAUNCHYSE,
Arrayed in ful noble gyse.
She was not broun ne dun of hewe,
But whyt as snowe y-fallen newe.
Hir nose was wrought at poynt devys,
For it was gentil and tretys;
With eyen gladde, and browes bente;
Hir heer doun to hir heles wente.
And she was simple as dowve on tree,
Ful debonaire of herte was she.
She durste never seyn ne do
But that thing that hir longed to.
And if a man were in distresse,
And for hir love in hevinesse,
Hir herte wolde have ful greet pitee,
She was so amiable and free.
For were a man for her bistad,
She wolde ben right sore adrad
That she dide over greet outrage,
But she him holpe his harm to aswage;
Hir thoughte it elles a vilanye.
And she hadde on a sukkenye,

That not of hempen herdes was ;
So fair was noon in alle Arras.
Lord, it was rideled fetysly !
Ther nas nat oo poynt, trewely,
That it nas in his right assyse.
Ful wel y-clothed was Fraunchyse ;
For ther is no cloth sitteth bet
On damiselle, than doth roket.
A womman wel more fetys is
In roket than in cote, y-wis.
The whyte roket, rideled faire,
Bitokened, that ful debonaire
And swete was she that it bere.
By hir daunced a bachelere ;
I can not telle you what he highte,
But fair he was, and of good highte,
Al hadde he be, I sey no more,
The lordes sone of Windesore.

CURTESYE

And next that daunced CURTESYE,
That preised was of lowe and hye,
For neither proud ne fool was she.
She for to daunce called me,
(I pray god yeve hir right good grace !)
Whan I com first into the place.
She was not nyce, ne outrageous,
But wys and war, and vertuous,
Of faire speche, and faire answere ;
Was never wight misseid of here ;
She bar no rancour to no wight.
Cleer broun she was, and therto bright
Of face, of body avenaunt ;
I wot no lady so plesaunt.
She were worthy for to bene
An emperesse or crouned quene.
And by hir wente a knight dauncing
That worthy was and wel speking,
And ful wel coude he doon honour.
The knight was fair and stif in stour,

And in armure a semely man,
And wel biloved of his lemman.

YDELNESSE

Fair YDELNESSE than saugh I,
That alwey was me faste by.
Of hir have I, withouten fayle,
Told yow the shap and aparayle;
For (as I seide) lo, that was she
That dide me so great bountee,
That she the gate of the gardin
Undide, and leet me passen in.

YOUTHE

And after daunced, as I gesse,
YOUTHE, fulfild of lustinesse,
That nas not yit twelve yeer of age,
With herte wilde, and thought volage;
Nyce she was, but she ne mente
Noon harm ne slight in hir entente,
But only lust and jolitee.
For yonge folk, wel witen ye,
Have litel thought but on hir play.
Hir lemman was bisyde alway,
In swich a gyse, that he hir kiste
At alle tymes that him liste,
That al the daunce mighte it see;
They make no force of privetee;
For who spak of hem yvel or wel,
They were ashamed never-a-del,
But men mighte seen hem kisse there,
As it two yonge douves were.
For yong was thilke bachelere,
Of beaute wot I noon his pere;
And he was right of swich an age
As Youthe his leef, and swich corage.
The lusty folk thus daunced there,
And also other that with hem were,
That weren alle of hir meynee;
Ful hende folk, and wys, and free,

And folk of fair port, trewely,
Ther weren alle comunly.
Whan I hadde seen the countenaunces
Of hem that ladden thus these daunces,
Than hadde I wil to goon and see
The gardin that so lyked me,
And loken on these faire loreres,
On pyn-trees, cedres, and oliveres.
The daunces than y-ended were;
For many of hem that daunced there
Were with hir loves went awey
Under the trees to have hir pley.
A, lord! they lived lustily!
A gret fool were he, sikerly,
That nolde, his thankes, swich lyf lede!
For this dar I seyn, out of drede,
That who-so mighte so wel fare,
For better lyf thurte him not care;
For ther nis so good paradys
As have a love at his devys.
Out of that place wente I tho,
And in that gardin gan I go,
Pleying along ful merily.
The God of Love ful hastely
Unto him Swete-Loking clepte,
No lenger wolde he that he kepte
His bowe of golde, that shoon so bright.
He bad him bende it anon-right;
And he ful sone it sette on ende,
And at a braid he gan it bende,
And took him of his arowes fyve,
Ful sharpe and redy for to dryve.
Now god that sit in magestee
Fro deedly woundes kepe me,
If so be that he wol me shete;
For if I with his arowe mete,
It wol me greven sore, y-wis!
But I, that no-thing wiste of this,
Wente up and doun ful many a wey,
And he me folwed faste alwey;

But no-wher wolde I reste me,
Til I hadde al the yerde in be.
The gardin was, by mesuring,
Right even and squar in compassing;
It was as long as it was large.

THE TREES

Of fruyt hadde every tree his charge,
But it were any hidous tree
Of which ther were two or three.
Ther were, and that wot I ful wel,
Of pomgarnettes a ful gret del;
That is a fruyt ful wel to lyke,
Namely to folk whan they ben syke
And trees ther were, greet foisoun,
That baren notes in hir sesoun,
Such as men notemigges calle,
That swote of savour been withalle.
And alemandres greet plentee,
Figes, and many a date-tree
Ther weren, if men hadde nede,
Through the yerd in length and brede.
Ther was eek wexing many a spyce,
As clow-gelofre, and licoryce,
Gingere, and greyn de paradys,
Canelle, and setewale of prys,
And many a spyce delitable,
To eten whan men ryse fro table.
And many hoomly trees ther were,
That peches, coynes, and apples bere,
Medlers, ploumes, peres, chesteynes,
Cheryse, of whiche many on fayn is,
Notes, aleys, and bolas,
That for to seen it was solas;
With many high lorer and pyn
Was renged clene al that gardyn;
With cipres, and with oliveres,
Of which that nigh no plente here is.
Ther were elmes grete and stronge,
Maples, asshe, ook, ash, planes longe,

Fyn ew, popler, and lindes faire,
And othere trees ful many a payre.
What sholde I telle you more of it?
Ther were so many treës yit,
That I sholde al encombred be
Er I had rekened every tree.
These trees were set, that I devyse,
Oon from another, in assyse,
Five fadome or sixe, I trowe so,
But they were hye and grete also:
And for to kepe out wel the sonne,
The croppes were so thikke y-ronne,
And every braunch in other knet,
And ful of grene leves set,
That sonne mighte noon descende,
Lest it the tendre grasses shende.
Ther mighte men does and roes y-see,
And of squirels ful greet plentee,
From bough to bough alwey leping.
Conies ther were also playing,
That comen out of hir claperes
Of sondry colours and maneres,
And maden many a turneying
Upon the fresshe gras springing.

The Welles

In places saw I welles there,
In whiche ther no frogges were,
And fair in shadwe was every welle;
But I ne can the nombre telle
Of stremes smale, that by devys
Mirthe had don come through condys,
Of which the water, in renning,
Gan make a noyse ful lyking.
About the brinkes of thise welles,
And by the stremes over-al elles
Sprang up the gras, as thikke y-set
And softe as any veluët,
On which men mighte his lemman leye,
As on a fetherbed, to pleye,

For th'erthe was ful softe and swete.
Through moisture of the welle wete
Sprang up the sote grene gras,
As fair, as thikke, as mister was.
But muche amended it the place,
That th'erthe was of swich a grace
That it of floures had plente,
That both in somer and winter be.
Ther sprang the violete al newe,
And fresshe pervinke, riche of hewe,
And floures yelowe, whyte, and rede;
Swich plentee grew ther never in mede.
Ful gay was al the ground, and queynt,
And poudred, as men had it peynt,
With many a fresh and sondry flour,
That casten up ful good savour.
I wol not longe holde you in fable
Of al this gardin delitable.
I moot my tonge stinten nede,
For I ne may, withouten drede,
Naught tellen you the beautee al,
Ne half the bountee therewithal.
I wente on right honde and on left
Aboute the place; it was not left,
Til I hadde al the yerde in been,
In the estres that men mighte seen.
And thus whyle I wente in my pley,
The God of Love me folowed ay,
Right as an hunter can abyde
The beste, til he seeth his tyde
To shete, at good mes, to the dere,
Whan that him nedeth go no nere.
And so befil, I rested me
Besyde a welle, under a tree,
Which tree in Fraunce men call a pyn.
But, sith the tyme of king Pepyn,
Ne grew ther tree in mannes sighte
So fair, ne so wel woxe in highte;
In al that yerde so high was noon.
And springing in a marble-stoon

Had nature set, the sothe to telle,
Under that pyn-tree a welle.
And on the border, al withoute,
Was writen, in the stone aboute,
Lettres smale, that seyden thus,
'Here starf the faire Narcisus.'

NARCISUS

NARCISUS was a bachelere,
That Love had caught in his daungere,
And in his net gan him so streyne,
And dide him so to wepe and pleyne,
That nede him muste his lyf forgo.
For a fair lady, hight Echo,
Him loved over any creature,
And gan for him swich peyne endure,
That on a tyme she him tolde,
That, if he hir loven nolde,
That hir behoved nedes dye,
Ther lay non other remedye.
But natheles, for his beautee,
So fiers and daungerous was he,
That he nolde graunten hir asking,
For weping, ne for fair praying.
And whan she herde him werne hir so,
She hadde in herte so gret wo,
And took it in so gret dispyt,
That she, withoute more respyt,
Was deed anoon. But, er she deyde,
Ful pitously to god she preyde,
That proude-herted Narcisus,
That was in love so daungerous,
Mighte on a day ben hampred so
For love, and been so hoot for wo,
That never he mighte joye atteyne;
Than shulde he fele in every veyne
What sorowe trewe lovers maken,
That been so vilaynsly forsaken.
This prayer was but resonable,
Therfor god held it ferme and stable:

For Narcisus, shortly to telle,
By aventure com to that welle
To reste him in that shadowing
A day, whan he com fro hunting
This Narcisus had suffred paynes
For renning alday in the playnes,
And was for thurst in greet distresse
Of hete, and of his werinesse
That hadde his breeth almost binomen.
Whan he was to that welle y-comen,
That shadwed was with braunches grene,
He thoughte of thilke water shene
To drinke and fresshe him wel withalle;
And doun on knees he gan to falle,
And forth his heed and nekke outstraughte
To drinken of that welle a draughte.
And in the water anoon was sene
His nose, his mouth, his yën shene,
And he ther-of was al abasshed;
His owne shadowe had him bitrasshed.
For wel wende he the forme see
Of a child of greet beautee.
Wel couthe Love him wreke tho
Of daunger and of pryde also
That Narcisus somtyme him bere.
He quitte him wel his guerdon there;
For he so musede in the welle,
That, shortly al the sothe to telle,
He lovede his owne shadowe so,
That atte laste he starf for wo.
For whan he saugh that he his wille
Mighte in no maner wey fulfille,
And that he was so faste caught
That he him couthe comfort naught,
He loste his wit right in that place,
And deyde within a litel space.
And thus his warisoun he took
For the lady that he forsook.
Ladyes, I preye ensample taketh,
Ye that ayeins your love mistaketh:

For if hir deeth be yow to wyte,
God can ful wel your whyle quyte.
  Whan that this lettre, of whiche I telle,
Had taught me that it was the welle
Of Narcisus in his beautee,
I gan anoon withdrawe me,
Whan it fel in my remembraunce,
That him bitidde swich mischaunce.

THE WELLE

But at the laste than thoughte I,
That scatheles, ful sikerly,
I mighte unto THE WELLE go.
Wherof shulde I abasshen so?
Unto the welle than wente I me,
And doun I louted for to see
The clere water in the stoon,
And eek the gravel, which that shoon
Down in the botme, as silver fyn;
For of the welle, this is the fyn,
In world is noon so cleer of hewe.
The water is ever fresh and newe
That welmeth up in wawes brighte
The mountance of two finger highte.
Abouten it is gras springing,
For moiste so thikke and wel lyking,
That it ne may in winter dye,
No more than may the see be drye.
  Down at the botme set saw I
Two cristal stones craftely
In thilke fresshe and faire welle.
But o thing soothly dar I telle,
That ye wol holde a greet mervayle
Whan it is told, withouten fayle.
For whan the sonne, cleer in sighte,
Cast in that welle his bemes brighte,
And that the heet descended is,
Than taketh the cristal stoon, y-wis,
Agayn the sonne an hundred hewes,
Blewe, yelowe, and rede, that fresh and newe is.

Yit hath the merveilous cristal
Swich strengthe, that the place overal,
Bothe fowl and tree, and leves grene,
And al the yerd in it is sene.
And for to doon you understonde,
To make ensample wol I fonde;
Right as a mirour openly
Sheweth al thing that stant therby,
As wel the colour as the figure,
Withouten any coverture;
Right so the cristal stoon, shyning,
Withouten any disceyving,
The estres of the yerde accuseth
To him that in the water museth;
For ever, in which half that he be,
He may wel half the gardin see;
And if he turne, he may right wel
Seen the remenaunt everydel.
For ther is noon so litel thing
So hid, ne closed with shitting,
That it ne is sene, as though it were
Peynted in the cristal there.
This is the mirour perilous,
In which the proude Narcisus
Saw al his face fair and bright,
That made him sith to lye upright.
For who-so loke in that mirour,
Ther may no-thing ben his socour
That he ne shal ther seen som thing
That shal him lede into loving.
Ful many a worthy man hath it
Y-blent; for folk of grettest wit
Ben sone caught here and awayted;
Withouten respyt been they bayted.
Heer comth to folk of-newe rage,
Heer chaungeth many wight corage;
Heer lyth no reed ne wit therto;
For Venus sone, daun Cupido,
Hath sowen there of love the seed,
That help ne lyth ther noon, ne reed,

So cercleth it the welle aboute.
His ginnes hath he set withoute
Right for to cacche in his panteres
These damoysels and bacheleres.
Love will noon other bridde cacche,
Though he sette either net or lacche.
And for the seed that heer was sowen,
This welle is cleped, as wel is knowen,
The Welle of Love, of verray right,
Of which ther hath ful many a wight
Spoke in bokes dyversely.
But they shulle never so verily
Descripcioun of the welle here,
No eek the sothe of this matere,
As ye shulle, whan I have undo
The craft that hir bilongeth to.
Alway me lyked for to dwelle,
To seen the cristal in the welle,
That shewed me ful openly
A thousand thinges faste by.
But I may saye, in sory houre
Stood I to loken or to poure;
For sithen have I sore syked,
That mirour hath me now entryked
But hadde I first knowen in my wit
The vertue and the strengthe of it,
I nolde not have mused there;
Me hadde bet ben elles-where;
For in the snare I fel anoon,
That hath bitraisshed many oon.

The Roser

In thilke mirour saw I tho,
Among a thousand thinges mo,
A roser charged ful of roses,
That with an hegge aboute enclos is.
Tho had I swich lust and envye,
That, for Parys ne for Pavye,
Nolde I have left to goon and see
Ther grettest hepe of roses be.

Whan I was with this rage hent,
That caught hath many a man and shent,
Toward the roser gan I go.
And whan I was not fer therfro,
The savour of the roses swote
Me smoot right to the herte rote,
As I hadde al embawmed be.
And if I ne hadde endouted me
To have ben hated or assailed,
My thankes, wolde I not have failed
To pulle a rose of al that route
To beren in myn honde aboute,
And smellen to it wher I wente;
But ever I dredde me to repente,
And lest it greved or for-thoughte
The lord that thilke gardyn wroughte
Of roses were ther gret woon,
So faire wexe never in roon.
Of knoppes clos, some saw I there,
And some wel beter woxen were;
And some ther been of other moysoun,
That drowe nigh to hir sesoun,
And spedde hem faste for to sprede;
I love wel swiche roses rede;
For brode roses, and open also,
Ben passed in a day or two;
But knoppes wilen fresshe be
Two dayes atte leest, or three.
The knoppes gretly lyked me,
For fairer may ther no man see.
Who-so mighte haven oon of alle,
It oughte him been ful leef withalle.
Mighte I a gerlond of hem geten,
For no richesse I wolde it leten.

The Knoppe

Among the knoppes I chees oon
So fair, that of the remenaunt noon
Ne preyse I half so wel as it,
Whan I avyse it in my wit.

For it so wel was enlumyned
With colour reed, as wel y-fyned
As nature couthe it make faire,
And it had leves wel foure paire,
That Kinde had set through his knowing
About the rede rose springing.
The stalke was as risshe right,
And theron stood the knoppe upright,
That it ne bowed upon no syde.
The swote smelle sprong so wyde
That it dide al the place aboute—

FRAGMENT B

Whan I had smelled the savour swote,
No wille hadde I fro thens yit go,
But somdel neer it wente I tho
To take it; but myn hond, for drede,
Ne dorste I to the rose bede,
For thistels sharpe, of many maneres,
Netles, thornes, and hoked breres;
Ful muche they distourbled me,
For sore I dradde to harmed be.
The God of Love, with bowe bent,
That al day set hadde his talent
To pursuen and to spyen me,
Was stonding by a fige-tree.
And whan he sawe how that I
Had chosen so ententifly
The botoun, more unto my pay
Than any other that I say,
He took an arowe ful sharply whet,
And in his bowe whan it was set,
He streight up to his ere drough
The stronge bowe, that was so tough,
And shet at me so wonder smerte,
That through myn eye unto myn herte
The takel smoot, and depe it wente.
And ther-with-al such cold me hente,
That, under clothes warme and softe,
Sith that day I have chevered ofte.
Whan I was hurt thus in that stounde,
I fel doun plat unto the grounde.

Myn herte failed and feynted ay,
And long tyme ther a-swone I lay.
But whan I com out of swoning,
And hadde wit, and my feling,
I was al maat, and wende ful wel
Of blood have loren a ful gret del.
But certes, the arowe that in me stood
Of me ne drew no drope of blood,
For-why I found my wounde al dreye.
Than took I with myn hondis tweye
The arowe, and ful fast out it plight,
And in the pulling sore I sight.
So at the last the shaft of tree
I drough out, with the fethers three.
But yet the hoked heed, y-wis,
The whiche Beautee callid is,
Gan so depe in myn herte passe,
That I it mighte nought arace;
But in myn herte stille it stood,
Al bledde I not a drope of blood.
I was bothe anguissous and trouble
For the peril that I saw double;
I niste what to seye or do,
Ne gete a leche my woundis to;
For neithir thurgh gras ne rote,
Ne hadde I help of hope ne bote.
But to the botoun ever-mo
Myn herte drew; for al my wo,
My thought was in non other thing.
For hadde it been in my keping,
It wolde have brought my lyf agayn
For certeinly, I dar wel seyn,
The sight only, and the savour,
Alegged muche of my langour.
Than gan I for to drawe me
Toward the botoun fair to see;
And Love hadde gete him, in a throwe,
Another arowe into his bowe,
And for to shete gan him dresse;
The arowis name was Simplesse.

And whan that Love gan nyghe me nere,
He drow it up, withouten were,
And shet at me with al his might,
So that this arowe anon-right
Thourghout myn eigh, as it was founde,
Into myn herte hath maad a wounde.
Thanne I anoon dide al my crafte
For to drawen out the shafte,
And ther-with-al I sighed eft.
But in myn herte the heed was left,
Which ay encresid my desyre,
Unto the botoun drawe nere;
And ever, mo that me was wo,
The more desyr hadde I to go
Unto the roser, where that grew
The fresshe botoun so bright of hewe.
Betir me were have leten be;
But it bihoved nedes me
To don right as myn herte bad.
For ever the body must be lad
Aftir the herte; in wele and wo,
Of force togidre they must go.
But never this archer wolde fyne
To shete at me with all his pyne,
And for to make me to him mete.
The thridde arowe he gan to shete
Whan best his tyme he mighte espye,
The which was named Curtesye;
Inte myn herte it dide avale.
A-swone I fel, bothe deed and pale;
Long tyme I lay, and stired nought,
Til I abraid out of my thought.
And faste than I avysed me
To drawen out the shafte of tree;
But ever the heed was left bihinde
For ought I couthe pulle or winde,
So sore it stikid whan I was hit,
That by no craft I might it flit;
But anguissous and ful of thought,
I felte such wo, my wounde ay wrought,

That somoned me alway to go
Toward the rose, that pleased me so;
But I ne durste in no manere,
Bicause the archer was so nere.
For evermore gladly, as I rede,
Brent child of fyr hath muche drede.
And, certis yit, for al my peyne,
Though that I sigh yit arwis reyne,
And grounde quarels sharpe of stele,
Ne for no payne that I might fele,
Yit might I not my-silf with-holde
The faire roser to biholde;
For Love me yaf sich hardement
For to fulfille his commaundement.
Upon my feet I roos up than
Feble, as a forwoundid man;
And forth to gon my might I sette,
And for the archer nolde I lette.
Toward the roser fast I drow;
But thornes sharpe mo than y-now
Ther were, and also thistels thikke,
And breres, brimme for to prikke,
That I ne mighte gete grace
The rowe thornes for to passe,
To sene the roses fresshe of hewe,
I must abide, though it me rewe,
The hegge aboute so thikke was,
That closid the roses in compas.
But o thing lyked me right wele;
I was so nygh, I mighte fele
Of the botoun the swote odour,
And also see the fresshe colour;
And that right gretly lyked me,
That I so neer it mighte see.
Sich joye anoon therof hadde I,
That I forgat my malady.
To sene it hadde I sich delyt,
Of sorwe and angre I was al quit,
And of my woundes that I had thar;
For no-thing lyken me might mar

Than dwellen by the roser ay,
And thennes never to passe away.
But whan a whyle I had be thar,
The God of Love, which al to-shar
Myn herte with his arwis kene,
Caste him to yeve me woundis grene.
He shet at me ful hastily
An arwe named Company,
The whiche takel is ful able
To make these ladies merciable.
Than I anoon gan chaungen hewe
For grevaunce of my wounde newe,
That I agayn fel in swoning,
And sighed sore in compleyning.
Sore I compleyned that my sore
On me gan greven more and more.
I had non hope of allegeaunce;
So nigh I drow to desperaunce,
I rought of dethe ne of lyf,
Whither that love wolde me dryf.
If me a martir wolde he make,
I might his power nought forsake.
And whyl for anger thus I wook,
The God of Love an arowe took;
Ful sharp it was and ful pugnaunt,
And it was callid Fair-Semblaunt,
The which in no wys wol consente,
That any lover him repente
To serve his love with herte and alle,
For any peril that may bifalle.
But though this arwe was kene grounde
As any rasour that is founde,
To cutte and kerve, at the poynt,
The God of Love it hadde anoynt
With a precious oynement,
Somdel to yeve aleggement
Upon the woundes that he had
Through the body in my herte maad,
To helpe hir sores, and to cure,
And that they may the bet endure.

But yit this arwe, withoute more,
Made in myn herte a large sore,
That in ful gret peyne I abood.
By ay the oynement wente abrood;
Throughout my woundes large and wyde
It spredde aboute in every syde;
Through whos vertu and whos might
Myn herte joyful was and light.
I had been deed and al to-shent
But for the precious oynement.
The shaft I drow out of the arwe,
Roking for wo right wondir narwe;
But the heed which made me smerte,
Lefte bihinde in myn herte
With other foure, I dar well say,
That never wol be take away;
But the oynement halp me wele.
And yit sich sorwe dide I fele
Of my woundes fresshe and newe,
That al-day I chaunged hewe,
As men might see in my visage.
The arwis were so fulle of rage,
So variaunt of diversitee,
That men in everich mighte see
Both gret anoy and eek swetnesse,
And joye meynt with bittirnesse,
Now were they esy, now where they wood,
In hem I felte both harm and good;
Now sore without aleggement,
Now softening with oynement;
It softned here, and prikked there,
Thus ese and anger togider were.
The God of Love deliverly
Com lepand to me hastily,
And seide to me, in gret rape,
'Yeld thee, for thou may not escape!
May no defence availe thee here;
Therfore I rede mak no daungere.
If thou wolt yelde thee hastily,
Thou shalt the rather have mercy.

He is a fool in sikernesse,
That with daunger or stoutnesse
Rebellith ther that he shulde plese;
In such folye is litel ese.
Be meek, wher thou must nedis bowe;
To stryve ageyn is nought thy prowe.
Come at ones, and have y-do,
For I wol that it be so.
Than yeld thee here debonairly.'
And I answerid ful humbly,
'Gladly, sir; at your bidding,
I wol me yelde in alle thing.
To your servyse I wol me take;
For god defende that I shulde make
Ageyn your bidding resistence;
I wol not doon so gret offence;
For if I dide, it were no skile.
Ye may do with me what ye wile,
Save or spille, and also sloo;
Fro you in no wyse may I go.
My lyf, my deth, is in your honde,
I may not laste out of your bonde.
Pleyn at your list I yelde me,
Hoping in herte, that sumtyme ye
Comfort and ese shulle me sende;
Or ellis shortly, this is the ende,
Withouten helthe I moot ay dure,
But-if ye take me to your cure.
Comfort or helthe how shuld I have,
Sith ye me hurte, but ye me save?
The helthe of lovers moot be founde
Wher-as they token firste hir wounde.
And if ye list of me to make
Your prisoner, I wol it take
Of herte and wil, fully at gree.
Hoolly and pleyn I yelde me,
Withoute feyning or feyntyse,
To be governed by your empryse.
Of you I here so much prys,
I wol ben hool at your devys

For to fulfille your lyking
And repente for no-thing,
Hoping to have yit in som tyde
Mercy, of that that I abyde.'
And with that covenaunt yeld I me,
Anoon doun kneling upon my knee,
Profering for to kisse his feet;
But for no-thing he wolde me lete,
And seide, 'I love thee bothe and preyse,
Sen that thyn answer doth me ese,
For thou answerid so curteisly.
For now I wot wel uttirly,
That thou art gentil, by thy speche.
For though a man fer wolde seche,
He shulde not finden, in certeyn,
No sich answer of no vileyn;
For sich a word ne mighte nought
Isse out of a vilayns thought.
Thou shalt not lesen of thy speche,
For to thy helping wol I eche,
And eek encresen that I may.
But first I wol that thou obay
Fully, for thyn avauntage,
Anon to do me here homage.
And sithen kisse thou shalt my mouth,
Which to no vilayn was never couth
For to aproche it, ne for to touche;
For sauf to cherlis I ne vouche
That they shulle never neigh it nere.
For curteys, and of fair manere,
Wel taught, and ful of gentilnesse
He muste ben, that shal me kisse,
And also of ful high fraunchyse,
That shal atteyne to that empryse.
'And first of o thing warne I thee,
That peyne and gret adversitee
He mot endure, and eek travaile,
That shal me serve, withoute faile.
But ther-ageyns, thee to comforte,
And with thy servise to desporte,

Thou mayst ful glad and joyful be
So good a maister to have as me,
And lord of so high renoun.
I bere of Love the gonfanoun,
Of Curtesye the banere;
For I am of the silf manere,
Gentil, curteys, meek and free;
That whosoever ententif be
Me to honoure, doute, and serve,
And also that he him observe
Fro trespas and fro vilanye,
And him governe in curtesye
With wil and with entencioun;
For whan he first in my prisoun
Is caught, than muste he uttirly,
Fro thennes-forth ful bisily,
Caste him gentil for to be,
If he desyre helpe of me.'
Anoon withouten more delay,
Withouten daunger or affray,
I bicom his man anoon,
And gave him thankes many a oon,
And kneled doun with hondis joynt,
And made it in my port ful quoynt;
The joye wente to myn herte rote.
Whan I had kissed his mouth so swote,
I had sich mirthe and sich lyking,
It cured me of languisshing.
He askid of me than hostages:—
'I have,' he seide, 'tan fele homages
Of oon and other, where I have been
Disceyved ofte, withouten wene.
These felouns, fulle of falsitee,
Have many sythes bigyled me,
And through falshede hir lust acheved,
Wherof I repente and am agreved.
And I hem gete in my daungere,
Hir falshed shulle they bye ful dere.
But for I love thee, I seye thee pleyn,
I wol of thee be more certeyn;

For thee so sore I wol now binde,
That thou away ne shalt not winde
For to denyen the covenaunt,
Or doon that is not avenaunt.
That thou were fals it were greet reuthe,
Sith thou semest so ful of treuthe.'
'Sire, if thee list to undirstande,
I merveile thee asking this demande.
For-why or wherfore shulde ye
Ostages or borwis aske of me,
Or any other sikirnesse,
Sith ye wote, in sothfastnesse,
That ye have me surprysed so,
And hool myn herte tan me fro,
That it wol do for me no-thing
But-if it be at your bidding?
Myn herte is yours, and myn right nought,
As it bihoveth, in dede and thought,
Redy in alle to worche your wille,
Whether so it turne to good or ille.
So sore it lustith you to plese,
No man therof may you disseise.
Ye have theron set sich justise,
That it is werreyd in many wise.
And if ye doute it nolde obeye,
Ye may therof do make a keye,
And holde it with you for ostage.'
'Now certis, this is noon outrage,'
Quoth Love, 'and fully I accord;
For the body he is ful lord
That hath the herte in his tresor;
Outrage it were to asken more.'
Than of his aumener he drough
A litel keye, fetys y-nough,
Which was of gold polisshed clere,
And seide to me, 'With this keye here
Thyn herte to me now wol I shette;
For al my jowellis loke and knette
I binde under this litel keye,
That no wight may carye aweye;

This keye is ful of gret poeste.'
With which anoon he touchid me
Undir the syde ful softely,
That he myn herte sodeynly
Without al anoy had spered,
That yit right nought it hath me dered.
Whan he had doon his wil al-out,
And I had put him out of dout,
'Sire,' I seide, 'I have right gret wille
Your lust and plesaunce to fulfille.
Loke ye my servise take at gree,
By thilke feith ye owe to me.
I seye nought for recreaundyse,
For I nought doute of your servyse.
But the servaunt traveileth in vayne,
That for to serven doth his payne
Unto that lord, which in no wyse
Can him no thank for his servyse.'
Love seide, 'Dismaye thee nought,
Sin thou for sucour hast me sought,
In thank thy servise wol I take,
And high of gree I wol thee make,
If wikkidnesse ne hindre thee;
But, as I hope, it shal nought be.
To worship no wight by aventure
May come, but-if he peyne endure.
Abyde and suffre thy distresse;
That hurtith now, it shal be lesse;
I wot my-silf what may thee save,
What medicyne thou woldist have.
And if thy trouthe to me thou kepe,
I shal unto thyn helping eke,
To cure thy woundes and make hem clene,
Wher-so they be olde or grene;
Thou shalt be holpen, at wordis fewe.
For certeynly thou shalt wel shewe
Wher that thou servest with good wille,
For to complisshen and fulfille
My comaundementis, day and night,
Whiche I to lovers yeve of right.'

'Ah, sire, for goddis love,' said I,
'Er ye passe hens, ententifly
Your comaundementis to me ye say,
And I shal kepe hem, if I may;
For hem to kepen is al my thought.
And if so be I wot them nought,
Than may I sinne unwitingly.
Wherfore I pray you enterely,
With al myn herte, me to lere,
That I trespasse in no manere.'
The God of Love than chargid me
Anoon, as ye shal here and see,
Word by word, by right empryse,
So as the Romance shal devyse.
The maister lesith his tyme to lere,
Whan the disciple wol not here.
It is but veyn on him to swinke,
That on his lerning wol not thinke.
Who-so lust love, let him entende,
For now the Romance ginneth amende.
Now is good to here, in fay,
If any be that can it say,
And poynte it as the resoun is
Set; for other-gate, y-wis,
It shal nought wel in alle thing
Be brought to good undirstonding;
For a reder that poyntith ille
A good sentence may ofte spille.
The book is good at the ending,
Maad of newe and lusty thing;
For who-so wol the ending here,
The crafte of love he shal now lere,
If that he wol so long abyde,
Til I this Romance may unhyde,
And undo the signifiaunce
Of this dreme into Romaunce.
The sothfastnesse, that now is hid,
Without coverture shal be kid,
Whan I undon have this dreming,
Wherin no word is of lesing.

'Vilany, at the biginning,
I wol,' sayd Love, 'over alle thing,
Thou leve, if thou wolt not be
Fals, and trespasse ageynes me.
I curse and blame generally
Alle hem that loven vilany;
For vilany makith vilayn,
And by his dedis a cherle is seyn.
Thise vilayns arn without pitee,
Frendshipe, love, and al bounte.
I nil receyve to my servyse
Hem that ben vilayns of empryse.
'But undirstonde in thyn entent,
That this is not myn entendement,
To clepe no wight in no ages
Only gentil for his linages.
But who-so that is vertuous,
And in his port nought outrageous,
Whan sich oon thou seest thee biforn,
Though he be not gentil born,
Thou mayst wel seyn, this is a soth,
That he is gentil, bicause he doth
As longeth to a gentilman;
Of hem non other deme I can.
For certeynly, withouten drede,
A cherle is demed by his dede,
Of hye or lowe, as ye may see,
Or of what kinrede that he be.
Ne say nought, for noon yvel wille,
Thing that is to holden stille;
It is no worship to misseye.
Thou mayst ensample take of Keye,
That was somtyme, for misseying,
Hated bothe of olde and ying;
As fer as Gaweyn, the worthy
Was preysed for his curtesy,
Keye was hated, for he was fel,
Of word dispitous and cruel.
Wherfore be wyse and aqueyntable,
Goodly of word, and resonable

Bothe to lesse and eek to mar.
And whan thou comest ther men ar,
Loke that thou have in custom ay
First to salue hem, if thou may:
And if it falle, that of hem som
Salue thee first, be not dom,
But quyte him curteisly anoon
Without abiding, er they goon.
'For no-thing eek thy tunge applye
To speke wordis of ribaudye.
To vilayn speche in no degree
Lat never thy lippe unbounden be.
For I nought holde him, in good feith,
Curteys, that foule wordis seith.
And alle wimmen serve and preyse,
And to thy power hir honour reyse.
And if that any missayere
Dispyse wimmen, that thou mayst here,
Blame him, and bidde him holde him stille.
And set thy might and al thy wille
Wimmen and ladies for to plese,
And to do thing that may hem ese,
That they ever speke good of thee,
For so thou mayst best preysed be.
'Loke fro pryde thou kepe thee wele;
For thou mayst bothe perceyve and fele,
That pryde is bothe foly and sinne;
And he that pryde hath, him withinne,
Ne may his herte, in no wyse,
Meken ne souplen to servyse.
For pryde is founde, in every part,
Contrarie unto Loves art.
And he that loveth trewely
Shulde him contene jolily,
Withouten pryde in sondry wyse,
And him disgysen in queyntyse.
For queynt array, withouten drede,
Is no-thing proud, who takith hede;
For fresh array, as men may see,
Withouten pryde may ofte be.

'Mayntene thy-silf aftir thy rent,
Of robe and eek of garnement;
For many sythe fair clothing
A man amendith in mich thing.
And loke alwey that they be shape,
What garnement that thou shalt make
Of him that can hem beste do,
With al that perteyneth therto.
Poyntis and sleves be wel sittand,
Right and streight upon the hand.
Of shoon and botes, newe and faire,
Loke at the leest thou have a paire;
And that they sitte so fetisly,
That these rude may uttirly
Merveyle, sith that they sitte so pleyn,
How they come on or of ageyn.
Were streite gloves, with aumenere
Of silk; and alwey with good chere
Thou yeve, if thou have richesse;
And if thou have nought, spend the lesse.
Alwey be merry, if thou may,
But waste not thy good alway.
Have hat of floures fresh as May,
Chapelet of roses of Whitsonday;
For sich array ne cost but lyte.
Thyn hondis wash, thy teeth make whyte,
And let no filthe upon thee be.
Thy nailes blak if thou mayst see,
Voide it awey deliverly,
And kembe thyn heed right jolily.
Fard not thy visage in no wyse,
For that of love is not th'empryse;
For love doth haten, as I finde,
A beaute that cometh not of kinde.
Alwey in herte I rede thee
Glad and mery for to be,
And be as joyful as thou can;
Love hath no joye of sorowful man.
That yvel is ful of curtesye
That lauhwith in his maladye;

For ever of love the siknesse
Is meynd with swete and bitternesse.
The sore of love is merveilous;
For now the lover is joyous,
Now can he pleyne, now can he grone,
Now can he singen, now maken mone.
To-day he pleyneth for hevinesse,
To-morowe he pleyeth for jolynesse
The lyf of love is ful contrarie,
Which stoundemele can ofte varie.
But if thou canst som mirthis make,
That men in gree wole gladly take,
Do it goodly, I comaunde thee;
For men sholde, wher-so-ever they be,
Do thing that hem best sitting is,
For therof cometh good loos and pris.
Wher-of that thou be vertuous,
Ne be not straunge ne daungerous.
For if that thou good rider be,
Prike gladly, that men may se.
In armes also if thou conne,
Pursue, til thou a name hast wonne.
And if thy voice be fair and clere,
Thou shalt maken no gret daungere
Whan to singe they goodly preye;
It is thy worship for to obeye.
Also to you it longith ay
To harpe and giterne, daunce and play:
For if he can wel foote and daunce,
It may him greetly do avaunce.
Among eek, for thy lady sake,
Songes and complayntes that thou make;
For that wol meve hem in hir herte,
Whan they reden of thy smerte.
Loke that no man for scarce thee holde,
For that may greve thee many-folde.
Resoun wol that a lover be
In his yiftes more large and free
Than cherles that been not of loving,
For who ther-of can any thing,

He shal be leef ay for to yeve,
In Loves lore who so wolde leve;
For he that, through a sodeyn sight,
Or for a kissing, anon-right
Yaf hool his herte in wille and thought,
And to him-silf kepith right nought,
Aftir swich yift, is good resoun,
He yeve his good in abandoun.
'Now wol I shortly here reherce,
Of that that I have seid in verse,
Al the sentence by and by,
In wordis fewe compendiously,
That thou the bet mayst on hem thinke,
Whether-so it be thou wake or winke;
For that the wordis litel greve
A man to kepe, whanne it is breve.
'Who-so with Love wol goon or ryde
He mot be curteys, and void of pryde,
Mery and fulle of jolite,
And of largesse alosed be.
'First I joyne thee, here in penaunce,
That ever, withoute repentaunce,
Thou set thy thought in thy loving,
To laste withoute repenting;
And thenke upon thy mirthis swete,
That shal folowe aftir whan ye mete.
'And for thou trewe to love shalt be,
I wol, and eek comaunde thee,
That in oo place thou sette, al hool,
Thyn herte, withouten halfen dool,
For trecherie, in sikernesse;
For I lovede never doublenesse.
To many his herte that wol depart,
Everiche shal have but litel part.
But of him drede I me right nought,
That in oo place settith his thought.
Therfore in oo place it sette,
And let it never thennes flette.
For if thou yevest it in lening,
I holde it but a wrecchid thing:

Therfore yeve it hool and quyte,
And thou shalt have the more merite.
If it be lent, than aftir soon,
The bountee and the thank is doon;
But, in love, free yeven thing
Requyrith a gret guerdoning.
Yeve it in yift al quit fully,
And make thy yift debonairly;
For men that yift wol holde more dere
That yeven is with gladsome chere.
That yift nought to preisen is
That man yeveth, maugre his.
Whan thou hast yeven thyn herte, as I
Have seid thee here al openly,
Than aventures shulle thee falle,
Which harde and hevy been withalle.
For ofte whan thou bithenkist thee
Of thy loving wher-so thou be,
Fro folk thou must depart in hy,
That noon perceyve thy malady,
But hyde thyn harm thou must alone,
And go forth sole, and make thy mone.
Thou shalt no whyl be in oo stat,
But whylom cold and whylom hat;
Now reed as rose, now yelowe and fade.
Such sorowe, I trowe, thou never hade;
Cotidien, ne yit quarteyne,
It is nat so ful of peyne.
For ofte tymes it shal falle
In love, among thy peynes alle,
That thou thy-self, al hoolly,
Foryeten shalt so utterly,
That many tymes thou shalt be
Stille as an image of tree,
Dom as a stoon, without stering
Of foot or hond, without speking;
Than, sone after al thy peyne,
To memorie shalt thou come ageyn,
As man abasshed wondre sore,
And after sighen more and more.

For wit thou wel, withouten wene,
In swich astat ful oft have been
That have the yvel of love assayd,
Wher-through thou art so dismayd.
'After, a thought shal take thee so,
That thy love is to fer thee fro:
Thou shalt say, "God, what may this be
That I ne may my lady see?
Myne herte aloon is to her go,
And I abyde al sole in wo,
Departed fro myn owne thought,
And with myne eyen see right nought.
Alas, myn eyen sende I ne may,
My careful herte to convay!
Myn hertes gyde but they be,
I praise no-thing what ever they see.
Shul they abyde thanne? nay;
But goon visyte without delay
That myn herte desyreth so.
For certeynly, but-if they go.
A fool my-self I may wel holde,
Whan I ne see what myn herte wolde.
Wherfore I wol gon her to seen,
Or esed shal I never been,
But I have som tokening."
Then gost thou forth without dwelling;
But ofte thou faylest of thy desyre,
Er thou mayst come hir any nere,
And wastest in vayn thy passage.
Than fallest thou in a newe rage;
For wante of sight thou ginnest morne,
And homward pensif dost retorne.
In greet mischeef than shalt thou be,
For than agayn shal come to thee
Sighes and pleyntes, with newe wo,
That no icching prikketh so.
Who wot it nought, he may go lere
Of hem that byen love so dere.
'No-thing thyn herte appesen may,
That oft thou wolt goon and assay,

If thou mayst seen, by aventure,
Thy lyves joy, thyn hertis cure ;
So that, by grace if thou might
Atteyne of hir to have a sight,
Than shalt thou doon non other dede
But with that sight thyn eyen fede.
That faire fresh whan thou mayst see,
Thyn herte shal so ravisshed be,
That never thou woldest, thy thankis, lete,
Ne remove, for to see that swete.
The more thou seest in sothfastnesse,
The more thou coveytest of that swetnesse ;
The more thyn herte brenneth in fyr,
The more thyn herte is in desyr.
For who considreth every del,
It may be lykned wondir wel,
The peyne of love, unto a fere ;
For ever the more thou neighest nere
Thought, or who-so that it be,
For verray sothe I telle it thee,
The hatter ever shal thou brenne,
As experience shal thee kenne.
Wher-so thou comest in any cost,
Who is next fyr, he brenneth most.
And yit forsothe, for al thyn hete,
Though thou for love swelte and swete,
Ne for no-thing thou felen may,
Thou shalt not willen to passe away.
And though thou go, yet must thee nede
Thenke al-day on hir fairhede,
Whom thou bihelde with so good wille ;
And holde thyself bigyled ille,
That thou ne haddest non hardement
To shewe hir ought of thyn entent.
Thyn herte ful sore thou wolt dispyse,
And eek repreve of cowardyse,
That thou, so dulle in every thing,
Were dom for drede, without speking,
Thou shalt eek thenke thou didest foly,
That thou wert hir so faste by,

And durst not auntre thee to say
Som-thing, er thou cam away;
For thou haddist no more wonne,
To speke of hir whan thou bigonne:
But yif she wolde, for thy sake,
In armes goodly thee have take,
It shulde have be more worth to thee
Than of tresour greet plentee.
'Thus shalt thou morne and eek compleyn,
And get enchesoun to goon ageyn
Unto thy walk, or to thy place,
Where thou biheld hir fleshly face.
And never, for fals suspeccioun,
Thou woldest finde occasioun
For to gon unto hir hous.
So art thou thanne desirous
A sight of hir for to have,
If thou thine honour mightest save,
Or any erand mightist make
Thider, for thy loves sake;
Ful fayn thou woldist, but for drede
Thou gost not, lest that men take hede.
Wherfore I rede, in thy going,
And also in thyn ageyn-coming,
Thou be wel war that men ne wit;
Feyne thee other cause than it
To go that weye, or faste by;
To hele wel is no folye.
And if so be it happe thee
That thou thy love ther mayst see,
In siker wyse thou hir salewe,
Wherwith thy colour wol transmewe,
And eke thy blood shal al to-quake,
Thy hewe eek chaungen for hir sake.
But word and wit, with chere ful pale,
Shul wante for to telle thy tale.
And if thou mayst so fer-forth winne,
That thou thy resoun durst biginne,
And woldist seyn three thingis or mo,
Thou shalt ful scarsly seyn the two.

Though thou bithenke thee never so wel,
Thou shalt forȝete yit somdel,
But-if thou dele with trecherye.
For fals lovers mowe al folye
Seyn, what hem lust, withouten drede,
They be so double in hir falshede;
For they in herte cunne thenke a thing
And seyn another, in hir speking.
And whan thy speche is endid al,
Right thus to thee it shal bifal;
If any word than come to minde,
That thou to seye hast left bihinde,
Than thou shalt brenne in greet martyr;
For thou shalt brenne as any fyr.
This is the stryf and eke the affray,
And the batail that lastith ay.
This bargeyn ende may never take,
But-if that she thy pees wil make.
'And whan the night is comen, anon
A thousand angres shal come upon.
To bedde as fast thou wolt thee dight,
Where thou shalt have but smal delyt;
For whan thou wenest for to slepe,
So ful of peyne shalt thou crepe,
Sterte in thy bedde aboute ful wyde,
And turne ful ofte on every syde;
Now downward groffe, and now upright,
And walowe in wo the longe night;
Thyne armis shalt thou sprede abrede,
As man in werre were forwerreyd.
Than shal thee come a remembraunce
Of hir shape and hir semblaunce
Wherto non other may be pere.
And wite thou wel, withoute were,
That thee shal seme, sometyme that night,
That thou hast hir, that is so bright,
Naked bitwene thyn armes there,
Al sothfastnesse as though it were.
Thou shalt make castels than in Spayne,
And dreme of joye, al but in vayne,

And thee delyten of right nought,
Whyl thou so slomrest in that thought,
That is so swete and delitable,
The which, in soth, nis but a fable,
For it ne shal no whyle laste.
Than shalt thou sighe and wepe faste,
And say, "Dere god, what thing is this?
My dreme is turned al amis,
Which was ful swete and apparent,
But now I wake, it is al shent
Now yede this mery thought away!
Twenty tymes upon a day
I wolde this thought wolde come ageyn,
For it alleggith wel my peyn.
It makith me ful of joyful thought,
It sleeth me, that it lastith noght.
A, lord! why nil ye me socoure,
The joye, I trowe, that I langoure?
The deth I wolde me shulde slo
Whyl I lye in hir armes two.
Myn harm is hard, withouten wene,
My greet unese ful oft I mene.
But wolde Love do so I might
Have fully joye of hir so bright,
My peyne were quit me richely.
Allas, to greet a thing aske I!
It is but foly, and wrong wening,
To aske so outrageous a thing.
And who-so askith folily,
He moot be warned hastily;
And I ne wot what I may say,
I am so fer out of the way;
For I wolde have ful gret lyking
And ful gret joye of lasse thing.
For wolde she, of hir gentilnesse,
Withouten more, me onis kesse,
It were to me a greet guerdoun,
Relees of al my passioun.
But it is hard to come therto;
Al is but foly that I do,

So high I have myn herte set,
Where I may no comfort get.
I noot wher I sey wel or nought;
But this I wot wel in my thought,
That it were bet of hir aloon,
For to stinte my wo and moon,
A loke on me y-cast goodly,
Than for to have, al utterly,
Of another al hool the pley.
A! lord! wher I shall byde the day
That ever she shal my lady be?
He is ful cured that may hir see.
A! god! whan shal the dawning spring?
To ly thus is an angry thing;
I have no joye thus here to ly
Whan that my love is not me by.
A man to lyen hath gret disese,
Which may not slepe ne reste in ese.
I wolde it dawed, and were now day,
And that the night were went away;
For were it day, I wolde upryse.
A! slowe sonne, shew thyn enpryse!
Speed thee to sprede thy bemis bright,
And chace the derknesse of the night,
To putte away the stoundes stronge,
Which in me lasten al to longe."

'The night shalt thou contene so,
Withoute rest, in peyne and wo;
If ever thou knewe of love distresse,
Thou shalt mowe lerne in that siknesse.
And thus enduring shalt thou ly,
And ryse on morwe up erly
Out of thy bedde, and harneys thee
Er ever dawning thou mayst see.
Al privily than shalt thou goon,
What weder it be, thy-silf aloon,
For reyn, or hayl, for snow, for slete,
Thider she dwellith that is so swete,
The which may falle aslepe be,
And thenkith but litel upon thee.

Than shalt thou goon, ful foule aferd ;
Loke if the gate be unsperd,
And waite without in wo and peyn,
Ful yvel a-colde in winde and reyn.
Than shal thou go the dore bifore,
If thou maist fynde any score,
Or hole, or reft, what ever it were ;
Than shalt thou stoupe, and lay to ere,
If they within a-slepe be ;
I mene, alle save thy lady free.
Whom waking if thou mayst aspye,
Go put thy-silf in jupartye,
To aske grace, and thee bimene,
That she may wite, withouten wene,
That thou anight no rest hast had,
So sore for hir thou were bistad.
Wommen wel ought pite to take
Of hem that sorwen for hir sake.
And loke, for love of that relyke,
That thou thenke non other lyke,
For whom thou hast so greet annoy,
Shal kisse thee er thou go away,
And hold that in ful gret deyntee.
And, for that no man shal thee see
Bifore the hous, ne in the way,
Loke thou be goon ageyn er day.
Suche coming, and such going,
Such hevinesse, and such walking,
Makith lovers, withouten wene,
Under hir clothes pale and lene,
For Love leveth colour ne cleernesse ;
Who loveth trewe hath no fatnesse.
Thou shalt wel by thy-selfe see
That thou must nedis assayed be.
For men that shape hem other wey
Falsly her ladies to bitray,
It is no wonder though they be fat ;
With false othes hir loves they gat ;
For oft I see suche losengeours
Fatter than abbatis or priours.

'Yet with o thing I thee charge,
That is to seye, that thou be large
Unto the mayd that hir doth serve,
So best hir thank thou shalt deserve.
Yeve hir yiftes, and get hir grace,
For so thou may hir thank purchace,
That she thee worthy holde and free,
Thy lady, and alle that may thee see.
Also hir servauntes worshipe ay,
And plese as muche as thou may;
Gret good through hem may come to thee,
Bicause with hir they been prive.
They shal hir telle how they thee fand
Curteis and wys, and wel doand,
And she shal preyse thee wel the mare.
Loke out of londe thou be not fare;
And if such cause thou have, that thee
Bihoveth gon out of contree,
Leve hool thyn herte in hostage,
Til thou ageyn make thy passage.
Thenk long to see the swete thing
That hath thyn herte in hir keping.
'Now have I told thee, in what wyse
A lover shal do me servyse.
Do it than, if thou wolt have
The mede that thou aftir crave.'
Whan Love al this had boden me,
I seide him:—'Sire, how may it be
That lovers may in such manere
Endure the peyne ye have seid here?
I merveyle me wonder faste,
How any man may live or laste
In such peyne, and such brenning,
In sorwe and thought, and such sighing,
Ay unrelesed wo to make,
Whether so it be they slepe or wake.
In such annoy continuely,
As helpe me god, this merveile I,
How man, but he were maad of stele,
Might live a month, such peynes to fele.'

The God of Love than seide me,
'Freend, by the feith I owe to thee,
May no man have good, but he it by.
A man loveth more tendirly
The thing that he hath bought most dere.
For wite thou wel, withouten were,
In thank that thing is taken more,
For which a man hath suffred sore.
Certis, no wo ne may atteyne
Unto the sore of loves peyne.
Non yvel therto ne may amounte,
No more than a man may counte
The dropes that of the water be.
For drye as wel the grete see
Thou mightist, as the harmes telle
Of hem that with Love dwelle
In servyse; for peyne hem sleeth,
And that ech man wolde flee the deeth,
And trowe they shulde never escape,
Nere that hope couthe hem make
Glad as man in prisoun set,
And may not geten for to et
But barly-breed, and watir pure,
And lyeth in vermin and in ordure;
With alle this, yet can he live,
Good hope such comfort hath him yive,
Which maketh wene that he shal be
Delivered and come to liberte;
In fortune is his fulle trust,
Though he lye in strawe or dust,
In hope is al his susteyning.
And so for lovers, in hir wening,
Whiche Love hath shit in his prisoun;
Good-Hope is hir salvacioun.
Good-Hope, how sore that they smerte,
Yeveth hem bothe wille and herte
To profre hir body to martyre;
For Hope so sore doth hem desyre
To suffre ech harm that men devyse,
For joye that aftir shal aryse.

'Hope, in desire to cacche victorie;
In Hope, of love al the glorie,
For Hope is al that love may yive;
Nere Hope, ther shulde no lover live.
Blessid be Hope, which with desyre
Avaunceth lovers in such manere.
Good-Hope is curteis for to plese,
To kepe lovers from al disese.
Hope kepith his lond, and wol abyde,
For any peril that may betyde;
For Hope to lovers, as most cheef,
Doth hem enduren al mischeef;
Hope is her help, whan mister is.
And I shal yeve thee eek, y-wis,
Three other thingis, that greet solas
Doth to hem that be in my las.
'The firste good that may be founde,
To hem that in my lace be bounde,
Is Swete-Thought, for to recorde
Thing wherwith thou canst accorde
Best in thyn herte, wher she be;
Thought in absence is good to thee.
Whan any lover doth compleyne,
And liveth in distresse and peyne,
Than Swete-Thought shal come, as blyve,
Awey his angre for to dryve.
It makith lovers have remembraunce
Of comfort, and of high plesaunce,
That Hope hath hight him for to winne
For Thought anoon than shal biginne,
As fer, god wot, as he can finde,
To make a mirrour of his minde;
For to biholde he wol not lette.
Hir person he shal afore him sette,
Hir laughing eyen, persaunt and clere,
Hir shape, hir fourme, hir goodly chere,
Hir mouth that is so gracious,
So swete, and eek so saverous;
Of alle hir fetures he shal take hede,
His eyen with alle hir limes fede.

'Thus Swete-Thenking shal aswage
The peyne of lovers, and hir rage.
Thy joye shal double, withoute gesse,
Whan thou thenkist on hir semlinesse,
Or of hir laughing, or of hir chere,
That to thee made thy lady dere.
This comfort wol I that thou take;
And if the next thou wolt forsake
Which is not lesse saverous,
Thou shuldist been to daungerous.
'The secounde shal be Swete-Speche,
That hath to many oon be leche,
To bringe hem out of wo and were,
And helpe many a bachilere;
And many a lady sent socoure,
That have loved par-amour,
Through speking, whan they mighten here
Of hir lovers, to hem so dere.
To hem it voidith al hir smerte,
The which is closed in hir herte.
In herte it makith hem glad and light,
Speche, whan they mowe have sight.
And therfore now it cometh to minde
In olde dawes, as I finde,
That clerkis writen that hir knewe,
Ther was a lady fresh of hewe,
Which of hir love made a song,
On him for to remembre among,
In which she seide, "Whan that I here
Speken of him that is so dere,
To me it voidith al my smerte,
Y-wis, he sit so nere myn herte.
To speke of him, at eve or morwe,
It cureth me of al my sorwe.
To me is noon so high plesaunce
As of his persone daliaunce."
She wist ful wel that Swete-Speking
Comfortith in ful muche thing.
Hir love she had ful wel assayed,
Of him she was ful wel apayed;

To speke of him hir joye was set.
Therfore I rede thee that thou get
A felowe that can wel concele
And kepe thy counsel, and wel hele,
To whom go shewe hoolly thyn herte,
Both wele and wo, joye and smerte:
To gete comfort to him thou go,
And privily, between yow two,
Ye shal speke of that goodly thing,
That hath thyn herte in hir keping;
Of hir beaute and hir semblaunce,
And of hir goodly countenaunce.
Of al thy state thou shalt him sey,
And aske him counseil how thou may
Do any thing that may hir plese;
For it to thee shal do gret ese,
That he may wite thou trust him so,
Bothe of thy wele and of thy wo.
And if his herte to love be set,
His companye is muche the bet,
For resoun wol, he shewe to thee
Al uttirly his privite;
And what she is he loveth so,
To thee pleynly he shal undo,
Withoute drede of any shame,
Bothe telle hir renoun and hir name.
Than shal he forther, ferre and nere,
And namely to thy lady dere,
In siker wyse; ye, every other
Shal helpen as his-owne brother,
In trouthe withoute doublenesse,
And kepen cloos in sikernesse.
For it is noble thing, in fay,
To have a man thou darst say
Thy prive counsel every del;
For that wol comfort thee right wel,
And thou shalt holde thee wel apayed,
Whan such a freend thou hast assayed.
'The thridde good of greet comfort
That yeveth to lovers most disport,

Comith of sight and biholding,
That clepid is Swete-Loking,
The whiche may noon ese do,
Whan thou art fer thy lady fro ;
Wherfore thou prese alwey to be
In place, where thou mayst hir se.
For it is thing most amerous,
Most delitable and saverous,
For to aswage a mannes sorowe,
To seue his lady by the morowe.
For it is a ful noble thinge
Whan thyn eyen have meting
With that relyke precious,
Wherof they be so desirous.
But al day after, soth it is,
They have no drede to faren amis,
They dreden neither wind ne reyn,
Ne yit non other maner peyn.
For whan thyn eyen were thus in blis,
Yit of hir curtesye, y-wis,
Aloon they can not have hir joye,
But to the herte they it convoye ;
Part of hir blis to him they sende,
Of al this harm to make an ende.
The eye is a good messangere,
Which can to the herte in such manere
Tidyngis sende, that he hath seen,
To voide him of his peynes cleen.
Wherof the herte reioyseth so
That a gret party of his wo
Is voided, and put awey to flight.
Right as the derknesse of the night
Is chased with clerenesse of the mone,
Right so is al his wo ful sone
Devoided clene, whan that the sight
Biholden may that fresshe wight
That the herte desyreth so,
That al his derknesse is ago ;
For than the herte is al at ese,
Whan they seen that that may hem plese.

'Now have I thee declared al-out,
Of that thou were in drede and dout;
For I have told thee feithfully
What thee may curen utterly,
And alle lovers that wole be
Feithful, and ful of stabilite.
Good-Hope alwey kepe by thy syde,
And Swete-Thought make eek abyde,
Swete-Loking and Swete-Speche;
Of alle thyn harmes they shal be leche.
Of every thou shalt have greet plesaunce;
If thou canst byde in sufferaunce,
And serve wel without feyntyse,
Thou shalt be quit of thyn empryse,
With more guerdoun, if that thou live;
But al this tyme this I thee yive.'
The God of Love whan al the day
Had taught me, as ye have herd say,
And enfourmed compendiously,
He vanished awey al sodeynly,
And I alone lefte, al sole,
So ful of compleynt and of dole,
For I saw no other man ther me by.
My woundes me greved wondirly;
Me for to curen no-thing I knew,
Save the botoun bright of hew,
Wheron was set hoolly my thought;
Of other comfort knew I nought,
But it were through the God of Love;
I knew nat elles to my bihove
That might me ese or comfort gete,
But-if he wolde him entermete.
The roser was, withoute doute,
Closed with an hegge withoute,
As ye to-forn have herd me seyn;
And fast I bisied, and wolde fayn
Have passed the haye, if I might
Have geten in by any slight
Unto the botoun so fair to see.
But ever I dradde blamed to be,

If men wolde have suspeccioun
That I wolde of entencioun
Have stole the roses that ther were;
Therfore to entre I was in fere.
But at the last, as I bithought
Whether I sholde passe or nought,
I saw com with a gladde chere
To me, a lusty bachelere,
Of good stature, and of good hight,
And Bialacoil forsothe he hight.
Sone he was to Curtesy,
And he me graunted ful gladly
The passage of the outer hay,
And seide:—'Sir, how that ye may
Passe, if it your wille be,
The fresshe roser for to see,
And ye the swete savour fele.
Your warrant may I be right wele;
So thou thee kepe fro folye,
Shal no man do thee vilanye.
If I may helpe you in ought,
I shal not feyne, dredeth nought;
For I am bounde to your servyse,
Fully devoide of feyntyse.'
Than unto Bialacoil saide I,
'I thank you, sir, ful hertely,
And your biheest I take at gree,
That ye so goodly profer me;
To you it cometh of greet fraunchyse,
That ye me profer your servyse.'
Than aftir, ful deliverly,
Through the breres anoon wente I,
Wherof encombred was the hay.
I was wel plesed, the soth to say,
To see the botoun fair and swote,
So fresshe spronge out of the rote.
And Bialacoil me served wel,
Whan I so nygh me mighte fele
Of the botoun the swete odour,
And so lusty hewed of colour.

But than a cherl (foule him bityde !)
Bisyde the roses gan him hyde,
To kepe the roses of that roser,
Of whom the name was Daunger.
This cherl was hid there in the greves,
Covered with grasse and with leves,
To spye and take whom that he fond
Unto that roser putte an hond.
He was not sole, for ther was mo ;
For with him were other two
Of wikked maners, and yvel fame.
That oon was clepid, by his name,
Wikked-Tonge, god yeve him sorwe !
For neither at eve, ne at morwe,
He can of no man no good speke,
On many a just man doth he wreke.
Ther was a womman eek, that hight
Shame, that, who can reken right,
Trespas was hir fadir name,
Hir moder Resoun ; and thus was Shame
On lyve brought of these ilk two.
And yet had Trespas never ado
With Resoun, ne never ley hir by,
He was so hidous and ugly,
I mene, this that Trespas hight ;
But Resoun conceyveth, of a sight,
Shame, of that I spak aforn.
And whan that Shame was thus born,
It was ordeyned, that Chastitee
Shulde of the roser lady be,
Which, of the botouns more and las,
With sondry folk assailed was,
That she ne wiste what to do.
For Venus hir assailith so,
That night and day from hir she stal
Botouns and roses over-al.
To Resoun than prayeth Chastitee,
Whom Venus flemed over the see,
That she hir doughter wolde hir lene,
To kepe the roser fresh and grene.

Anoon Resoun to Chastitee
Is fully assented that it be,
And grauntid hir, at hir request,
That Shame, bicause she is honest,
Shal keper of the roser be.
And thus to kepe it ther were three,
That noon shulde hardy be ne bold
(Were he yong, or were he old)
Ageyn hir wille awey to bere
Botouns ne roses, that ther were.
I had wel sped, had I not been
Awayted with these three, and seen.
For Bialacoil, that was so fair,
So gracious and debonair,
Quitte him to me ful curteisly,
And, me to plese, bad that I
Shuld drawe me to the botoun nere;
Prese in, to touche the rosere
Which bar the roses, he yaf me leve;
This graunt ne might but litel greve.
And for he saw it lyked me,
Right nygh the botoun pullede he
A leef al grene, and yaf me that,
The which ful nygh the botoun sat;
I made me of that leef ful queynt.
And whan I felte I was aqueynt
With Bialacoil, and so prive,
I wende al at my wille had be.
Then wex I hardy for to tel
To Bialacoil how me bifel
Of Love, that took and wounded me,
And seide: 'Sir, so mote I thee,
I may no joye have in no wyse,
Upon no syde, but it ryse;
For sithe (if I shal not feyne)
In herte I have had so gret peyne,
So gret annoy, and such affray,
That I ne wot what I shal say;
I drede your wrath to disserve.
Lever me were, that knyves kerve

My body shulde in pecis smalle,
Than in any wyse it shulde falle
That ye wratthed shulde been with me.'
'Sey boldely thy wille,' quod he,
'I nil be wroth, if that I may,
For nought that thou shalt to me say.'
Thanne seide I, 'Sir, not you displese
To knowen of my greet unese,
In which only love hath me brought;
For peynes greet, disese and thought,
Fro day to day he doth me drye;
Supposeth not, sir, that I lye.
In me fyve woundes dide he make,
The sore of whiche shal never slake
But ye the botoun graunte me,
Which is most passaunt of beautee,
My lyf, my deth, and my martyre,
And tresour that I most desyre.'
Than Bialacoil, affrayed all,
Seyde, 'Sir, it may not fall;
That ye desire, it may not ryse.
What? wolde ye shende me in this wyse?
A mochel foole than I were,
If I suffrid you awey to bere
The fresh botoun, so fair of sight.
For it were neither skile ne right
Of the roser ye broke the rind,
Or take the rose aforn his kind;
Ye ar not courteys to aske it.
Lat it stil on the roser sit,
And growe til it amended be,
And parfitly come to beaute.
I nolde not that it pulled wer
Fro the roser that it ber,
To me it is so leef and dere.'
With that sterte out anoon Daungere,
Out of the place where he was hid.
His malice in his chere was kid;
Ful greet he was, and blak of hewe,
Sturdy and hidous, who-so him knewe;

Like sharp urchouns his here was growe,
His eyes rede as the fire-glow;
His nose frounced ful kirked stood,
He com criand as he were wood,
And seide, 'Bialacoil, tel me why
Thou bringest hider so boldly
Him that so nygh is the roser?
Thou worchist in a wrong maner;
He thenkith to dishonour thee,
Thou art wel worthy to have maugree
To late him of the roser wit;
Who serveth a feloun is yvel quit.
Thou woldist have doon greet bountee,
And he with shame wolde quyte thee.
Flee hennes, felowe! I rede thee go!
It wanteth litel I wol thee slo;
For Bialacoil ne knew thee nought,
Whan thee to serve he sette his thought;
For thou wolt shame him, if thou might,
Bothe ageyn resoun and right.
I wol no more in thee affye,
That comest so slyghly for tespye;
For it preveth wonder wel,
Thy slight and tresoun every del.'
I durst no more ther make abode,
For the cherl, he was so wode;
So gan he threten and manace,
And thurgh the haye he did me chace.
For feer of him I tremblid and quook,
So cherlishly his heed he shook;
And seide, if eft he might me take,
I shulde not from his hondis scape.
Than Bialacoil is fled and mate,
And I al sole, disconsolate,
Was left aloon in peyne and thought;
For shame, to deth I was nygh brought.
Than thought I on myn high foly,
How that my body, utterly,
Was yeve to peyne and to martyre;
And therto hadde I so gret yre,

That I ne durst the hayes passe ;
There was non hope, there was no grace.
I trowe never man wiste of peyne,
But he were laced in Loves cheyne ;
Ne no man wot, and sooth it is,
But-if he love, what anger is.
Love holdith his heest to me right wele,
Whan peyne he seide I shulde fele.
Non herte may thenke, ne tunge seyne,
A quarter of my wo and peyne.
I might not with the anger laste ;
Myn herte in poynt was for to braste,
Whan I thought on the rose, that so
Was through Daunger cast me fro.
A long whyl stood I in that state,
Til that me saugh so mad and mate
The lady of the highe ward,
Which from hir tour lokid thiderward.
Resoun men clepe that lady,
Which from hir tour deliverly
Come doun to me withouten more.
But she was neither yong, ne hore,
Ne high ne low, ne fat ne lene,
But best, as it were in a mene.
Hir eyen two were cleer and light
As any candel that brenneth bright ;
And on hir heed she hadde a crown.
Hir semede wel an high persoun ;
For rounde enviroun, hir crownet
Was ful of riche stonis fret.
Hir goodly semblaunt, by devys,
I trowe were maad in paradys ;
Nature had never such a grace,
To forge a werk of such compace.
For certeyn, but the letter lye,
God him-silf, that is so high,
Made hir aftir his image,
And yaf hir sith sich avauntage,
That she hath might and seignorye
To kepe men from al folye ;

Who-so wole trowe hir lore,
Ne may offenden nevermore.
And whyl I stood thus derk and pale,
Resoun bigan to me hir tale;
She seide: 'Al hayl, my swete frend!
Foly and childhood wol thee shend,
Which thee have put in greet affray;
Thou hast bought dere the tyme of May,
That made thyn herte mery to be.
In yvel tyme thou wentist to see
The gardin, wherof Ydilnesse
Bar the keye, and was maistresse
Whan thou yedest in the daunce
With hir, and haddest aqueyntaunce:
Hir aqueyntaunce is perilous,
First softe, and aftirward noyous;
She hath thee trasshed, withoute ween;
The God of Love had thee not seen,
Ne hadde Ydilnesse thee conveyed
In the verger where Mirthe him pleyed.
If Foly have supprised thee,
Do so that it recovered be;
And be wel war to take no more
Counsel, that greveth aftir sore;
He is wys that wol himsilf chastyse.
And though a young man in any wyse
Trespace among, and do foly,
Lat him not tarye, but hastily
Lat him amende what so be mis.
And eek I counseile thee, y-wis,
The God of Love hoolly foryet,
That hath thee in sich peyne set,
And thee in herte tormented so.
I can nat seen how thou mayst go
Other weyes to garisoun;
For Daunger, that is so feloun,
Felly purposith thee to werrey,
Which is ful cruel, the soth to sey.
'And yit of Daunger cometh no blame,
In reward of my doughter Shame,

Which hath the roses in hir warde,
As she that may be no musarde.
And Wikked-Tunge is with these two,
That suffrith no man thider go;
For er a thing be do, he shal,
Where that he cometh, over-al,
In fourty places, if it be sought,
Seye thing that never was doon ne wrought;
So moche tresoun is in his male,
Of falsnesse for to feyne a tale.
Thou delest with angry folk, y-wis;
Wherfor to thee it bettir is
From these folk awey to fare,
For they wol make thee live in care.
This is the yvel that Love they calle,
Wherin ther is but foly alle,
For love is foly everydel;
Who loveth, in no wyse may do wel,
Ne sette his thought on no good werk.
His scole he lesith, if he be clerk;
Of other craft eek if he be,
He shal not thryve therin; for he
In love shall have more passioun
Than monke, hermyte, or chanoun.
The peyne is hard, out of mesure,
The joye may eek no whyl endure;
And in the possessioun
Is muche tribulacioun;
The joye it is so short-lasting,
And but in happe is the geting;
For I see ther many in travaille,
That atte laste foule fayle.
I was no-thing thy counseler,
Whan thou wert maad the homager
Of God of Love to hastily;
Ther was no wisdom, but foly.
Thyn herte was joly, but not sage,
Whan thou were brought in sich a rage,
To yelde thee so redily,
And to Love, of his gret maistry.

'I rede thee Love awey to dryve,
That makith thee recche not of thy lyve.
The foly more fro day to day
Shal growe, but thou it putte away.
Take with thy teeth the bridel faste,
To daunte thyn herte; and eek thee caste,
If that thou mayst, to gete defence
For to redresse thy first offence.
Who-so his herte alwey wol leve,
Shal finde among that shal him greve.'
Whan I hir herd thus me chastyse,
I answerd in ful angry wyse.
I prayed hir cessen of hir speche,
Outher to chastyse me or teche,
To bidde me my thought refreyne,
Which Love hath caught in his demeyne:—
'What? wene ye Love wol consent,
That me assailith with bowe bent,
To draw myn herte out of his honde,
Which is so quikly in his bonde?
That ye counsayle, may never be;
For whan he first arested me,
He took myn herte so hool him til,
That it is no-thing at my wil;
He taughte it so him for to obey,
That he it sparred with a key.
I pray yow lat me be al stille.
For ye may wel, if that ye wille,
Your wordis waste in idilnesse;
For utterly, withouten gesse,
Al that ye seyn is but in veyne.
Me were lever dye in the peyne,
Than Love to me-ward shulde arette
Falsheed, or tresoun on me sette.
I wol me gete prys or blame,
And love trewe, to save my name;
Who me chastysith, I him hate.'
With that word Resoun wente hir gate,
Whan she saugh for no sermoning
She might me fro my foly bring.

Than dismayed, I lefte al sool,
Forwery, forwandred as a fool,
For I ne knew no chevisaunce.
Than fel into my remembraunce,
How Love bade me to purveye
A felowe, to whom I mighte seye
My counsel and my privete,
For that shulde muche availe me.
With that bithought I me, that I
Hadde a felowe faste by,
Trewe and siker, curteys, and hend,
And he was called by name a Freend;
A trewer felowe was no-wher noon.
In haste to him I wente anoon,
And to him al my wo I tolde,
Fro him right nought I wold withholde.
I tolde him al withoute were,
And made my compleynt on Daungere,
How for to see he was hidous,
And to-me-ward contrarious;
The whiche through his cruelte
Was in poynt to have meygned me;
With Bialacoil whan he me sey
Within the gardyn walke and pley,
Fro me he made him for to go,
And I bilefte aloon in wo;
I durst no lenger with him speke,
For Daunger seide he wolde be wreke,
Whan that he sawe how I wente
The fresshe botoun for to hente,
If I were hardy to come neer
Bitwene the hay and the roser.
This Freend, whan he wiste of my thought,
He discomforted me right nought,
But seide, 'Felowe, be no so mad,
Ne so abaysshed nor bistad.
My-silf I knowe ful wel Daungere,
And how he is feers of his chere,
At prime temps, Love to manace;
Ful ofte I have ben in his caas.

A feloun first though that he be,
Aftir thou shalt him souple see.
Of long passed I knew him wele;
Ungoodly first though men him fele,
He wol meek aftir, in his bering,
Been, for service and obeysshing.
I shal thee telle what thou shalt do:—
Mekely I rede thou go him to,
Of herte pray him specialy
Of thy trespace to have mercy,
And hote him wel, him here to plese,
That thou shalt nevermore him displese.
Who can best serve of flatery,
Shal plese Daunger most uttirly.'
My Freend hath seid to me so wel,
That he me esid hath somdel,
And eek allegged of my torment;
For through him had I hardement
Agayn to Daunger for to go,
To preve if I might meke him so.
To Daunger cam I, al ashamed,
The which aforn me hadde blamed,
Desyring for to pese my wo;
But over hegge durst I not go,
For he forbad me the passage.
I fond him cruel in his rage,
And in his hond a gret burdoun.
To him I knelid lowe adoun,
Ful meke of port, and simple of chere,
And seide, 'Sir, I am comen here
Only to aske of you mercy.
That greveth me, sir, ful gretly
That ever my lyf I wratthed you,
But for to amende I am come now,
With al my might, bothe loude and stille,
To doon right at your owne wille;
For Love made me for to do
That I have trespassed hidirto;
Fro whom I ne may withdrawe myn herte;
Yit shal I never, for joy ne smerte,

What so bifalle, good or ille,
Offende more ageyn your wille.
Lever I have endure disese
Than do that shulde you displese.
'I you require and pray, that ye
Of me have mercy and pitee,
To stinte your yre that greveth so,
That I wole swere for evermo
To be redressid at your lyking,
If I trespasse in any thing;
Save that I pray thee graunte me
A thing that may nat warned be,
That I may love, al only;
Non other thing of you aske I.
I shal doon elles wel, y-wis,
If of your grace ye graunte me this.
And ye ne may not letten me,
For wel wot ye that love is free,
And I shal loven, sith that I wil,
Who-ever lyke it wel or il;
And yit ne wold I, for al Fraunce,
Do thing to do you displesaunce.'
Than Daunger fil in his entent
For to foryeve his maltalent;
But all his wratthe yit at laste
He hath relesed, I preyde so faste:
Shortly he seide, 'Thy request
Is not to mochel dishonest;
Ne I wol not werne it thee,
For yit no-thing engreveth me.
For though thou love thus evermore,
To me is neither softe ne sore.
Love wher thee list; what recchith me,
So thou fer fro my roses be?
Trust not on me, for noon assay,
In any tyme to passe the hay.'
Thus hath he graunted my prayere.
Than wente I forth, withouten were,
Unto my Freend, and tolde him al,
Which was right joyful of my tale.

He seide, 'Now goth wel thyn affaire,
He shal to thee be debonaire.
Though he aforn was dispitous,
He shal heeraftir be gracious.
If he were touchid on som good veyne,
He shuld yit rewen on thy peyne.
Suffre, I rede, and no boost make,
Til thou at good mes mayst him take.
By suffraunce, and by wordis softe,
A man may overcomen ofte
Him that aforn he hadde in drede,
In bookis sothly as I rede.'
Thus hath my Freend with gret comfort
Avaunced me with high disport,
Which wolde me good as mich as I.
And thanne anoon ful sodeynly
I took my leve, and streight I went
Unto the hay ; for gret talent
I had to seen the fresh botoun,
Wherin lay my salvacioun ;
And Daunger took kepe, if that I
Kepe him covenaunt trewly.
So sore I dradde his manasing,
I durst not breken his bidding ;
For, lest that I were of him shent,
I brak not his comaundement,
For to purchase his good wil.
It was hard for to come ther-til,
His mercy was to fer bihinde ;
I wepte, for I ne might it finde.
I compleyned and sighed sore,
And languisshed evermore,
For I durst not over go
Unto the rose I loved so.
Thurghout my deming outerly,
Than had he knowlege certeinly,
That Love me ladde in sich a wyse,
That in me ther was no feyntyse,
Falsheed, ne no trecherye.
And yit he, ful of vilanye,

Of disdeyne, and cruelte,
On me ne wolde have pite,
His cruel wil for to refreyne,
Though I wepe alwey, and compleyne.
And while I was in this torment,
Were come of grace, by god sent,
Fraunchyse, and with hir Pite
Fulfild the botoun of bountee
They go to Daunger anon-right,
To forther me with al hir might,
And helpe in worde and in dede,
For wel they saugh that it was nede.
First, of hir grace, dame Fraunchyse
Hath taken word of this empryse:
She seide, 'Daunger, gret wrong ye do
To worche this man so muche wo,
Or pynen him so angerly;
It is to you gret vilany.
I can not see why, ne how,
That he hath trespassed ageyn you,
Save that he loveth; wherfore ye shulde
The more in cherete of him holde.
The force of love makith him do this;
Who wolde him blame he dide amis?
He leseth more than ye may do;
His peyne is hard, ye may see, lo!
And Love in no wyse wolde consente
That he have power to repente;
For though that quik ye wolde him sloo,
Fro Love his herte may not go.
Now, swete sir, is it your ese
Him for to angre or disese?
Allas, what may it you avaunce
To doon to him so greet grevaunce?
What worship is it agayn him take,
Or on your man a werre make,
Sith he so lowly every wyse
Is redy, as ye lust devyse?
If Love hath caught him in his lace,
You for t'obeye in every caas,

And been your suget at your wille,
Shulde ye therfore willen him ille?
Ye shulde him spare more, al-out,
Than him that is bothe proud and stout.
Curtesye wol that ye socour
Hem that ben meke undir your cure.
His herte is hard, that wole not meke,
Whan men of mekenesse him biseke.'
'That is certeyn,' seide Pite;
'We see ofte that humilitee
Bothe ire, and also felonye
Venquissheth, and also melancolye;
To stonde forth in such duresse,
This crueltee and wikkednesse.
Wherfore I pray you, sir Daungere,
For to mayntene no lenger here
Such cruel werre agayn your man,
As hoolly youres as ever he can;
Nor that ye worchen no more wo
On this caytif that languisshith so,
Which wol no more to you trespasse,
But put him hoolly in your grace.
His offense ne was but lyte;
The God of Love it was to wyte,
That he your thral so gretly is,
And if ye harm him, ye doon amis;
For he hath had ful hard penaunce,
Sith that ye refte him th'aqueyntaunce
Of Bialacoil, his moste joye,
Which alle his peynes might acoye.
He was biforn anoyed sore,
But than ye doubled him wel more;
For he of blis has ben ful bare,
Sith Bialacoil was fro him fare.
Love hath to him do greet distresse,
He hath no nede of more duresse.
Voideth from him your ire, I rede;
Ye may not winnen in his dede.
Maketh Bialacoil repeire ageyn,
And haveth pite upon his peyn;

For Fraunchise wol, and I, Pite,
That merciful to him ye be;
And sith that she and I accorde,
Have upon him misericorde;
For I you pray, and eek moneste,
Nought to refusen our requeste;
For he is hard and fel of thought,
That for us two wol do right nought.'
Daunger ne might no more endure,
He meked him unto mesure.
'I wol in no wyse,' seith Daungere,
'Denye that ye have asked here;
It were to greet uncurtesye.
I wol ye have the companye
Of Bialacoil, as ye devyse;
I wol him letten in no wyse.'
To Bialacoil than wente in hy
Fraunchyse, and seide ful curteisly:—
'Ye have to longe be deignous
Unto this lover, and daungerous,
Fro him to withdrawe your presence,
Which hath do to him grete offence,
That ye not wolde upon him see;
Wherfore a sorowful man is he.
Shape ye to paye him, and to plese,
Of my love if ye wol have ese.
Fulfil his wil, sith that ye knowe
Daunger is daunted and brought lowe
Thurgh help of me and of Pite;
You thar no more afered be.'
'I shal do right as ye wil,'
Saith Bialacoil, 'for it is skil,
Sith Daunger wol that it so be.'
Than Fraunchise hath him sent to me.
Bialacoil at the biginning
Salued me in his coming.
No straungenes was in him seen,
No more than he ne had wrathed been.
As faire semblaunt than shewed he me,
And goodly, as aforn did he;

And by the honde, withouten doute,
Within the haye, right al aboute
He ladde me, with right good chere,
Al environ the vergere,
That Daunger had me chased fro.
Now have I leve over-al to go;
Now am I raised, at my devys,
Fro helle unto paradys.
Thus Bialacoil, of gentilnesse,
With alle his peyne and besinesse,
Hath shewed me, only of grace,
The estres of the swote place.
I saw the rose, whan I was nigh,
Was gretter woxen, and more high,
Fresh, rody, and fair of hewe,
Of colour ever yliche newe.
And whan I had it longe seen,
I saugh that through the leves grene
The rose spredde to spanishing;
To sene it was a goodly thing.
But it ne was so spred on brede,
That men within might knowe the sede;
For it covert was and enclose
Bothe with the leves and with the rose.
The stalk was even and grene upright,
It was theron a goodly sight;
And wel the better, withouten wene,
For the seed was not y-sene.
Ful faire it spradde, god it blesse!
For suche another, as I gesse,
Aforn ne was, ne more vermayle.
I was abawed for merveyle,
For ever, the fairer that it was,
The more I am bounden in Loves laas.
Longe I abood there, soth to saye,
Til Bialacoil I gan to praye,
Whan that I saw him in no wyse
To me warnen his servyse,
That he me wolde graunte a thing,
Which to remembre is wel sitting;

This is to sayne, that of his grace
He wolde me yeve leyser and space
To me that was so desirous
To have a kissing precious
Of the goodly freshe rose,
That swetely smelleth in my nose;
'For if it you displesed nought,
I wolde gladly, as I have sought,
Have a cos therof freely
Of your yeft; for certainly
I wol non have but by your leve,
So loth me were you for to greve.'
He sayde, 'Frend, so god me spede,
Of Chastite I have suche drede,
Thou shuldest not warned be for me,
But I dar not, for Chastite.
Agayn hir dar I not misdo,
For alwey biddeth she me so
To yeve no lover leve to kisse;
For who therto may winnen, y-wis,
He of the surplus of the pray
May live in hope to get som day.
For who so kissing may attayne,
Of loves peyne hath, soth to sayne,
The beste and most avenaunt,
And ernest of the remenaunt.'
Of his answere I syghed sore;
I durst assaye him tho no more,
I had such drede to greve him ay.
A man shulde not to muche assaye
To chafe his frend out of mesure,
Nor put his lyf in aventure;
For no man at the firste stroke
Ne may nat felle doun an oke;
Nor of the reisins have the wyne,
Til grapes rype and wel afyne
Be sore empressid, I you ensure,
And drawen out of the pressure.
But I, forpeyned wonder stronge,
Thought that I abood right longe

Aftir the kis, in peyne and wo,
Sith I to kis desyred so:
Til that, rewing on my distresse,
Ther to me Venus the goddesse,
Which ay werreyeth Chastite,
Came of hir grace, to socoure me,
Whos might is knowe fer and wyde,
For she is modir of Cupyde,
The God of Love, blinde as stoon,
That helpith lovers many oon.
This lady brought in hir right hond
Of brenning fyr a blasing brond;
Wherof the flawme and hote fyr
Hath many a lady in desyr
Of love brought, and sore het,
And in hir servise hir hertes set.
This lady was of good entayle,
Right wondirful of apparayle;
By hir atyre so bright and shene,
Men might perceyve wel, and seen,
She was not of religioun.
Nor I nil make mencioun
Nor of hir robe, nor of tresour,
Of broche, nor of hir riche attour;
Ne of hir girdil aboute hir syde,
For that I nil not long abyde.
But knowith wel, that certeynly
She was arayed richely.
Devoyd of pryde certeyn she was;
To Bialacoil she wente a pas,
And to him shortly, in a clause,
She seide: 'Sir, what is the cause
Ye been of port so daungerous
Unto this lover, and deynous,
To graunte him no-thing but a kis?
To werne it him ye doon amis;
Sith wel ye wote, how that he
Is Loves servaunt, as ye may see,
And hath beaute, wher-through he is
Worthy of love to have the blis.

How he is semely, biholde and see,
How he is fair, how he is free,
How he is swote and debonair,
Of age yong, lusty, and fair.
Ther is no lady so hauteyne,
Duchesse, countesse, ne chasteleyne,
That I nolde holde hir ungoodly
For to refuse him outerly.
His breeth is also good and swete,
And eke his lippis rody, and mete
Only to pleyen, and to kisse.
Graunte him a kis, of gentilnesse!
His teeth arn also whyte and clene;
Me thinkith wrong, withouten wene,
If ye now werne him, trustith me,
To graunte that a kis have he;
The lasse to helpe him that ye haste,
The more tyme shul ye waste.'
Whan the flawme of the verry brond,
That Venus brought in hir right hond,
Had Bialacoil with hete smete,
Anoon he bad, withouten lette,
Graunte to me the rose kisse.
Than of my peyne I gan to lisse,
And to the rose anoon wente I,
And kissid it ful feithfully.
Thar no man aske if I was blythe,
Whan the savour soft and lythe
Strook to myn herte withoute more,
And me alegged of my sore,
So was I ful of joye and blisse.
It is fair sich a flour to kisse,
It was so swote and saverous.
I might not be so anguisshous,
That I mote glad and joly be,
Whan that I remembre me.
Yit ever among, sothly to seyn,
I suffre noye and moche peyn.
The see may never be so stil,
That with a litel winde it nil

Overwhelme and turne also,
As it were wood, in wawis go.
Aftir the calm the trouble sone
Mot folowe, and chaunge as the mone.
Right so fareth Love, that selde in oon
Holdith his anker; for right anoon
Whan they in ese wene best to live,
They been with tempest al fordrive.
Who serveth Love, can telle of wo;
The stoundemele joye mot overgo.
Now he hurteth, and now he cureth,
For selde in oo poynt Love endureth.
Now is it right me to procede,
How Shame gan medle and take hede,
Thurgh whom felle angres I have had;
And how the stronge wal was maad,
And the castell of brede and lengthe,
That God of Love wan with his strengthe.
Al this in romance wil I sette,
And for no-thing ne wil I lette,
So that it lyking to hir be,
That is the flour of beaute;
For she may best my labour quyte,
That I for hir love shal endyte.
Wikkid-Tunge, that the covyne
Of every lover can devyne
Worst, and addith more somdel,
(For Wikkid-Tunge seith never wel),
To me-ward bar he right gret hate,
Espying me erly and late,
Til he hath seen the grete chere
Of Bialacoil and me y-fere.
He mighte not his tunge withstonde
Worse to reporte than he fonde,
He was so ful of cursed rage;
It sat him wel of his linage,
For him an Irish womman bar.
His tunge was fyled sharp, and squar,
Poignaunt and right kerving,
And wonder bitter in speking.

For whan that he me gan espye,
He swoor, afferming sikirly,
Bitwene Bialacoil and me
Was yvel aquayntaunce and privee.
He spak therof so folily,
That he awakid Jelousy;
Which, al afrayed in his rysing,
Whan that he herde him jangling,
He ran anoon, as he were wood,
To Bialacoil ther that he stood;
Which hadde lever in this caas
Have been at Reynes or Amyas;
For foot-hoot, in his felonye
To him thus seide Jelousye:—
'Why hast thou been so necligent,
To kepen, whan I was absent,
This verger here left in thy ward?
To me thou haddist no reward,
To truste (to thy confusioun)
Him thus, to whom suspeccioun
I have right greet, for it is nede;
It is wel shewed by the dede.
Greet faute in thee now have I founde;
By god, anoon thou shalt be bounde,
And faste loken in a tour,
Withoute refuyt or socour.
For Shame to long hath be thee fro;
Over sone she was ago.
Whan thou hast lost bothe drede and fere,
It semed wel she was not here.
She was not bisy, in no wyse,
To kepe thee and to chastyse,
And for to helpen Chastitee
To kepe the roser, as thinkith me.
For than this boy-knave so boldely
Ne sholde not have be hardy,
Ne in this verger had such game,
Which now he turneth to gret shame.'
Bialacoil nist what to sey;
Ful fayn he wolde have fled awey,

For fere han hid, nere than he
Al sodeynly took him with me.
And whan I saugh he hadde so,
This Jelousye, take us two,
I was astoned, and knew no rede,
But fledde awey for verrey drede.
  Than Shame cam forth ful simply;
She wende have trespaced ful gretly;
Humble of hir port, and made it simple,
Wering a vayle in stede of wimple,
As nonnis doon in hir abbey.
Bicause hir herte was in affray,
She gan to speke, within a throwe,
To Jelousye, right wonder lowe.
First of his grace she bisought,
And seide:—'Sire, ne leveth nought
Wikkid-Tunge, that fals espye,
Which is so glad to feyne and lye.
He hath you maad, thurgh flatering,
On Bialacoil a fals lesing.
His falsnesse is not now anew,
It is to long that he him knew.
This is not the firste day;
For Wikkid-Tunge hath custom ay
Yongé folkis to bewreye,
And false lesinges on hem leye.
  'Yit nevertheles I see among,
That the loigne it is so longe
Of Bialacoil, hertis to lure,
In Loyes servise for to endure,
Drawing suche folk him to,
That he had no-thing with to do;
But in sothnesse I trowe nought,
That Bialacoil hadde ever in thought
To do trespace or vilanye;
But, for his modir Curtesye
Hath taught him ever for to be
Good of aqueyntaunce and privee;
For he loveth non hevinesse,
But mirthe and pley, and al gladnesse;

He hateth alle trecherous,
Soleyn folk and envious;
For wel ye witen how that he
Wol ever glad and joyful be
Honestly with folk to pley.
I have be negligent, in good fey,
To chastise him; therfore now I
Of herte crye you here mercy,
That I have been so recheles
To tamen him, withouten lees.
Of my foly I me repente;
Now wol I hool sette myn entente
To kepe, bothe loude and stille,
Bialacoil to do your wille.'
'Shame, Shame,' seyde Jelousy,
'To be bitrasshed gret drede have I.
Lecherye hath clombe so hye,
That almost blered is myn ye;
No wonder is, if that drede have I.
Over-al regnith Lechery,
Whos might yit growith night and day.
Bothe in cloistre and in abbey
Chastite is werreyed over-al.
Therfore I wol with siker wal
Close bothe roses and roser.
I have to longe in this maner
Left hem unclosid wilfully;
Wherfore I am right inwardly
Sorowful and repente me.
But now they shal no lenger be
Unclosid; and yit I drede sore,
I shal repente ferthermore,
For the game goth al amis.
Counsel I mot take newe, y-wis.
I have to longe tristed thee,
But now it shal no lenger be;
For he may best, in every cost,
Disceyve, that men tristen most.
I see wel that I am nygh shent,
But-if I sette my ful entent

Remedye to purveye.
Therfore close I shal the weye
Fro hem that wol the rose espye,
And come to wayte me vilanye,
For, in good feith and in trouthe,
I wol not lette, for no slouthe,
To live the more in sikirnesse,
To make anoon a forteresse,
To enclose the roses of good savour.
In middis shal I make a tour
To putte Bialacoil in prisoun,
For ever I drede me of tresoun.
I trowe I shal him kepe so,
That he shal have no might to go
Aboute to make companye
To hem that thenke of vilanye;
Ne to no such as hath ben here
Aforn, and founde in him good chere,
Which han assailed him to shende,
And with hir trowandyse to blende.
A fool is eyth for to bigyle;
But may I lyve a litel while,
He shal forthenke his fair semblaunt.'
And with that word cam Drede avaunt,
Which was abasshed, and in gret fere,
Whan he wiste Jelousye was there.
He was for drede in such affray,
That not a word durste he say,
But quaking stood ful stille aloon,
Til Jelousye his wey was goon,
Save Shame, that him not forsook;
Bothe Drede and she ful sore quook;
Til that at laste Drede abreyde,
And to his cosin Shame seyde:
'Shame,' he seide, 'in sothfastnesse,
To me it is gret hevinesse,
That the noyse so fer is go,
And the sclaundre of us two.
But sith that it is so bifalle,
We may it not ageyn do calle,

Whan onis sprongen is a fame.
For many a yeer withouten blame
We han been, and many a day;
For many an April and many a May
We han y-passed, not ashamed,
Til Jelousye hath us blamed
Of mistrust and suspecioun
Causeles, withouten enchesoun.
Go we to Daunger hastily,
And late us shewe him openly,
That he hath not aright y-wrought,
Whan that he sette nought his thought
To kepe better the purpryse;
In his doing he is not wyse.
He hath to us y-do gret wrong,
That hath suffred now so long
Bialacoil to have his wille,
Alle his lustes to fulfille.
He must amende it utterly,
Or ellis shal he vilaynsly
Exyled be out of this londe;
For he the werre may not withstonde
Of Jelousye, nor the greef,
Sith Bialacoil is at mischeef.'
To Daunger, Shame and Drede anoon
The righte wey ben bothe a-goon.
The cherl they founden hem aforn
Ligging undir an hawethorn.
Undir his heed no pilowe was,
But in the stede a trusse of gras.
He slombred, and a nappe he took,
Til Shame pitously him shook,
And greet manace on him gan make.
'Why slepist thou whan thou shuld wake?'
Quod Shame; 'thou dost us vilanye!
Who tristith thee, he doth folye,
To kepe roses or botouns,
Whan they ben faire in hir sesouns.
Thou art woxe to familiere
Where thou shulde be straunge of chere,

Stout of thy port, redy to greve.
Thou dost gret foly for to leve
Bialacoil here-in, to calle
The yonder man to shenden us alle.
Though that thou slepe, we may here
Of Jelousie gret noyse here.
Art thou now late? ryse up in hy,
And stoppe sone and deliverly
Alle the gappis of the hay;
Do no favour, I thee pray.
It fallith no-thing to thy name
Make fair semblaunt, where thou maist blame.
'If Bialacoil be swete and free,
Dogged and fel thou shuldist be;
Froward and outrageous, y-wis;
A cherl chaungeth that curteis is.
This have I herd ofte in seying,
That man ne may, for no daunting,
Make a sperhauke of a bosarde.
Alle men wole holde thee for musarde,
That debonair have founden thee;
It sit thee nought curteis to be;
To do men plesaunce or servyse,
In thee it is recreaundyse.
Let thy werkis, fer and nere,
Be lyke thy name, which is Daungere.'
Thau, al abawid in shewing,
Anoon spak Dreed, right thus seying,
And seide, 'Daunger, I drede me
That thou ne wolt not bisy be
To kepe that thou hast to kepe;
Whan thou shouldist wake, thou art aslepe.
Thou shalt be greved certeynly,
If thee aspye Jelousy,
Or if he finde thee in blame.
He hath to-day assailed Shame,
And chased awey, with gret manace,
Bialacoil out of this place,
And swereth shortly that he shal
Enclose him in a sturdy wal;

And al is for thy wikkednesse,
For that thee faileth straungenesse.
Thyn herte, I trowe, be failed al;
Thou shalt repente in special,
If Jealousye the sothe knewe;
Thou shalt forthenke, and sore rewe.'
With that the cherl his clubbe gan shake,
Frouning his eyen gan to make,
And hidous chere; as man in rage,
For ire he brente in his visage.
Whan that he herde him blamed so,
He seide, 'Out of my wit I go;
To be discomfit I have gret wrong.
Certis, I have now lived to long,
Sith I may not this closer kepe;
Al quik I wolde be dolven depe,
If any man shal more repeire
Into this garden, for foule or faire.
Myn herte for ire goth a-fere,
That I lete any entre here.
I have do foly, now I see,
But now it shal amended be.
Who settith foot here any more,
Truly, he shal repente it sore;
For no man mo into this place
Of me to entre shal have grace.
Lever I hadde, with swerdis tweyne,
Thurgh-out myn herte, in every veyne
Perced to be, with many a wounde,
Than slouthe shulde in me be founde.
From hennesforth, by night or day,
I shal defende it, if I may,
Withouten any excepcioun
Of ech maner condicioun;
And if I any man it graunte,
Holdeth me for recreaunte.'
Than Daunger on his feet gan stonde,
And hente a burdoun in his honde.
Wroth in his ire, ne lefte he nought,
But thurgh the verger he hath sought.

If he might finde hole or trace,
Wher-thurgh that men mot forthby pace,
Or any gappe, he dide it close,
That no man mighte touche a rose
Of the roser al aboute;
He shitteth every man withoute.
Thus day by day Daunger is wers,
More wondirful and more divers,
And feller eek than ever he was;
For him ful oft I singe 'allas!'
For I ne may nought, thurgh his ire,
Recover that I most desire.
Myn herte, allas, wol brest a-two,
For Bialacoil I wratthed so.
For certeynly, in every membre
I quake, whan I me remembre
Of the botoun, which that I wolde
Fulle ofte a day seen and biholde.
And whan I thenke upon the kisse,
And how muche joye and blisse
I hadde thurgh the savour swete,
For wante of it I grone and grete.
Me thenkith I fele yit in my nose
The swete savour of the rose.
And now I woot that I mot go
So fer the fresshe floures fro,
To me ful welcome were the deeth;
Absens therof, allas, me sleeth!
For whylom with this rose, allas,
I touched nose, mouth, and face;
But now the deeth I must abyde.
But Love consente, another tyde,
That ouis I touche may and kisse,
I trowe my peyne shal never lisse.
Theron is al my coveityse,
Which brent myn herte in many wyse.
Now shal repaire agayn sighinge,
Long wacche on nightis, and no slepinge;
Thought in wisshing, torment, and wo,
With many a turning to and fro,

That half my peyne I can not telle.
For I am fallen into helle
From paradys and welthe, the more
My turment greveth ; more and more
Anoyeth now the bittirnesse,
That I toforn have felt swetnesse.
And Wikkid-Tunge, thurgh his falshede,
Causeth al my wo and drede.
On me he leyeth a pitous charge,
Bicause his tunge was to large.
Now it is tyme, shortly that I
Telle you som-thing of Jelousy,
That was in gret suspecioun.
Aboute him lefte he no masoun,
That stoon coude leye, ne querrour ;
He hired hem to make a tour.
And first, the roses for to kepe,
Aboute hem made he a diche depe,
Right wondir large, and also brood ;
Upon the whiche also stood
Of squared stoon a sturdy wal,
Which on a cragge was founded al,
And right gret thikkenesse eek it bar.
Abouten, it was founded squar,
An hundred fadome on every syde,
It was al liche longe and wyde.
Lest any tyme it were assayled,
Ful wel aboute it was batayled ;
And rounde enviroun eek were set
Ful many a riche and fair touret.
At every corner of this wal
Was set a tour ful principal ;
And everich hadde, withoute fable,
A porte-colys defensable
To kepe of enemies, and to greve,
That there hir force wolde preve.
And eek amidde this purpryse
Was maad a tour of gret maistryse ;
A fairer saugh no man with sight,
Large and wyde, and of gret might.

They ne dredde noon assaut
Of ginne, gunne, nor skaffaut.
For the temprure of the mortere
Was maad of licour wonder dere ;
Of quikke lyme persant and egre,
The which was tempred with vinegre.
The stoon was hard as ademant,
Wherof they made the foundement.
The tour was rounde, maad in compas ;
In al this world no richer was,
Ne better ordeigned therwithal.
Aboute the tour was maad a wal,
So that, bitwixt that and the tour,
Rosers were set of swete savour,
With many roses that they bere.
And eek within the castel were
Springoldes, gunnes, bows, archers ;
And eek above, atte corners,
Men seyn over the walle stonde
Grete engynes, whiche were nigh honde ;
And in the kernels, here and there,
Of arblasters gret plentee were.
Noon armure might hir stroke withstonde,
It were foly to prece to honde.
Without the diche were listes made,
With walles batayled large and brade,
For men and hors shulde not atteyne
To neigh the diche over the pleyne.
Thus Jelousye hath enviroun
Set aboute his garnisoun
With walles rounde, and diche depe,
Only the roser for to kepe.
And Daunger eek, erly and late
The keyes kepte of the utter gate,
The which openeth toward the eest.
And he hadde with him atte leest
Thritty servauntes, echon by name.
That other gate kepte Shame,
Which openede, as it was couth,
Toward the parte of the south.

Sergeauntes assigned were hir to
Ful many, hir wille for to do.
Than Drede hadde in hir baillye
The keping of the conestablerye,
Toward the north, I undirstonde,
That opened upon the left honde,
The which for no-thing may be sure,
But-if she do hir bisy cure
Erly on morowe and also late,
Strongly to shette and barre the gate.
Of every thing that she may see
Drede is aferd, wher-so she be;
For with a puff of litel winde
Drede is astonied in hir minde.
Therfore, for stelinge of the rose,
I rede hir nought the yate unclose.
A foulis flight wol make hir flee,
And eek a shadowe, if she it see.
Thanne Wikked-Tunge, ful of envye,
With soudiours of Normandye,
As he that causeth al the bate,
Was keper of the fourthe gate,
And also to the tother three
He went ful ofte, for to see.
Whan his lot was to wake a-night,
His instrumentis wolde he dight,
For to blowe and make soun,
Ofter than he hath enchesoun;
And walken oft upon the wal,
Corners and wikettis over-al
Ful narwe serchen and espye;
Though he nought fond, yit wolde he lye.
Discordaunt ever fro armonye,
And distoned from melodye,
Controve he wolde, and foule fayle,
With hornpypes of Cornewayle.
In floytes made he discordaunce,
And in his musik, with mischaunce,
He wolde seyn, with notes newe,
That he ne fond no womman trewe,

Ne that he saugh never, in his lyf,
Unto hir husbonde a trewe wyf;
Ne noon so ful of honestee,
That she nil laughe and mery be
Whan that she hereth, or may espye,
A man speken of lecherye.
Everich of hem hath somme vyce;
Oon is dishonest, another is nyce;
If oon be ful of vilanye,
Another hath a likerous ye;
If oon be ful of wantonesse,
Another is a chideresse.
Thus Wikked-Tunge (god yeve him shame!)
Can putte hem everichone in blame
Withoute desert and causeles;
He lyeth, though they been giltles.
I have pite to seen the sorwe,
That waketh bothe eve and morwe,
To innocents doth such grevaunce;
I pray god yeve him evel chaunce,
That he ever so bisy is
Of any womman to seyn amis!
Eek Jelousye god confounde,
That hath y-maad a tour so rounde,
And made aboute a garisoun
To sette Bialacoil in prisoun;
The which is shet there in the tour,
Ful longe to holde there sojour,
There for to liven in penaunce.
And for to do him more grevaunce,
Ther hath ordeyned Jelousye
An olde yekke, for to espye
The maner of his governaunce;
The whiche devel, in hir enfaunce,
Had lerned muche of Loves art,
And of his pleyes took hir part;
She was expert in his servyse.
She knew ech wrenche and every gyse
Of love, and every loveres wyle,
It was the harder hir to gyle.

Of Bialacoil she took ay hede,
That ever he liveth in wo and drede.
He kepte him coy and eek privee,
Lest in him she hadde see
Any foly countenaunce,
For she knew al the olde daunce.
And aftir this, whan Jelousye
Had Bialacoil in his baillye,
And shette him up that was so free,
For seure of him he wolde be,
He trusteth sore in his castel;
The stronge werk him lyketh wel.
He dradde nat that no glotouns
Shulde stele his roses or botouns.
The roses weren assured alle,
Defenced with the stronge walle.
Now Jelousye ful wel may be
Of drede devoid, in libertee,
Whether that he slepe or wake;
For of his roses may noon be take.
But I, allas, now morne shal;
Bicause I was without the wal,
Ful moche dole and mone I made.
Who hadde wist what wo I hadde,
I trowe he wolde have had pitee.
Love to deere had sold to me
The good that of his love hadde I.
I wende a bought it al queyntly;
But now, thurgh doubling of my peyn,
I see he wolde it selle ageyn,
And me a newe bargeyn lere,
The which al-out the more is dere,
For the solace that I have lorn,
Than I hadde it never aforn.
Certayn I am ful lyk, indeed,
To him that cast in erthe his seed;
And hath joie of the newe spring,
Whan it greneth in the ginning,
And is also fair and fresh of flour,
Lusty to seen, swote of odour;

But er he it in sheves shere,
May falle a weder that shal it dere,
And maken it to fade and falle,
The stalk, the greyn, and floures alle;
That to the tilier is fordone
The hope that he hadde to sone.
I drede, certeyn, that so fare I;
For hope and travaile sikerly
Ben me biraft al with a storm;
The floure nil seden of my corn.
For Love hath so avaunced me,
Whan I bigan my privitee
To Bialacoil al for to telle,
Whom I ne fond froward ne felle,
But took a-gree al hool my play.
But Love is of so hard assay,
That al at onis he reved me,
Whan I wend best aboven have be.
It is of Love, as of Fortune,
That chaungeth ofte, and nil contune;
Which whylom wol on folke smyle,
And gloumbe on hem another whyle;
Now freend, now foo, thou shalt hir fele,
For in a twinkling tourneth hir wheel.
She can wrythe hir heed awey,
This is the concours of hir pley;
She can areyse that doth morne,
And whirle adown, and overturne
Who sittith hieghst, al as hir list;
A fool is he that wol hir trist.
For it am I that am com doun
Thurgh change and revolucioun!
Sith Bialacoil mot fro me twinne,
Shet in the prisoun yond withinne,
His absence at myn herte I fele;
For al my joye and al myn hele
Was in him and in the rose,
That but yon wal, which him doth close,
Open, that I may him see,
Love nil not that I cured be

Of the peynes that I endure,
Nor of my cruel aventure.
A, Bialacoil, myn owne dere!
Though thou be now a prisonere,
Kepe atte leste thyn herte to me,
And suffre not that it daunted be;
Ne lat not Jelousye, in his rage,
Putten thyn herte in no servage.
Although he chastice thee withoute,
And make thy body unto him loute,
Have herte as hard as dyamaunt,
Stedefast, and nought pliaunt;
In prisoun though thy body be,
At large kepe thyn herte free.
A trewe herte wol not plye
For no manace that it may drye.
If Jelousye doth thee payne,
Quyte him his whyle thus agayne,
To venge thee, atte leest in thought,
If other way thou mayest nought;
And in this wyse sotilly
Worche, and winne the maistry.
But yit I am in gret affray
Lest thou do not as I say;
I drede thou canst me greet maugree,
That thou emprisoned art for me;
But that is not for my trespas,
But thurgh me never discovered was
Yit thing that oughte be secree.
Wel more anoy ther is in me,
Than is in thee, of this mischaunce;
For I endure more hard penaunce
Than any man can seyn or thinke,
That for the sorwe almost I sinke.
Whan I remembre me of my wo,
Ful nygh out of my wit I go.
Inward myn herte I fele blede,
For comfortles the deeth I drede.
Ow I not wel to have distresse,
Whan false, thurgh hir wikkednesse,

And traitours, that arn envyous,
To noyen me be so coragious?
A, Bialacoil! ful wel I see,
That they hem shape to disceyve thee,
To make thee buxom to hir lawe,
And with hir corde thee to drawe
Wher-so hem lust, right at hir wil;
I drede they have thee brought thertil.
Withoute comfort, thought me sleeth;
This game wol bringe me to my deeth.
For if your gode wille I lese,
I mote be deed; I may not chese.
And if that thou foryete me,
Myn herte shal never in lyking be;
Nor elles-where finde solace,
If I be put out of your grace,
As it shal never been, I hope;
Than shulde I fallen in wanhope.
Allas, in wanhope?—nay, pardee!
For I wol never dispeired be.
If Hope me faile, than am I
Ungracious and unworthy;
In Hope I wol comforted be,
For Love, whan he bitaught hir me,
Seide, that Hope, wher-so I go,
Shulde ay be relees to my wo.
But what and she my balis bete,
And be to me curteis and swete?
She is in no-thing ful certeyn.
Lovers she put in ful gret peyn,
And makith hem with wo to dele.
Hir fair biheest disceyveth fele,
For she wol bihote, sikirly,
And failen aftir outrely.
A! that is a ful noyous thing!
For many a lover, in loving,
Hangeth upon hir, and trusteth fast,
Whiche lese hir travel at the last.
Of thing to comen she woot right nought;
Therfore, if it be wysly sought,

Hir counseille, foly is to take.
For many tymes, whan she wol make
A ful good silogisme, I drede
That aftirward ther shal in dede
Folwe an evel conclusioun;
This put me in confusioun.
For many tymes I have it seen,
That many have bigyled been,
For trust that they have set in Hope,
Which fel hem aftirward a-slope.
But natheles yit, gladly she wolde,
That he, that wol him with hir holde,
Hadde alle tymes his purpos clere,
Withoute deceyte, or any were.
That she desireth sikirly;
Whan I hir blamed, I did foly.
But what avayleth hir good wille,
Whan she ne may staunche my stounde ille?
That helpith litel, that she may do,
Outake biheest unto my wo.
And heeste certeyn, in no wyse,
Withoute yift, is not to pryse.
Whan heest and deed a-sundir varie,
They doon me have a gret contrarie.
Thus am I possed up and doun
With dool, thought, and confusioun;
Of my disese ther is no noumbre.
Daunger and Shame me encumbre,
Drede also, and Jelousye,
And Wikked-Tunge, ful of envye,
Of whiche the sharpe and cruel ire
Ful oft me put in gret martire.
They han my joye fully let,
Sith Bialacoil they have bishet
Fro me in prisoun wikkidly,
Whom I love so entierly,
That it wol my bane be,
But I the soner may him see.
And yit moreover, wurst of alle,
Ther is set to kepe, foule hir bifalle!

A rimpled vekke, fer ronne in age,
Frowning and yelowe in hir visage,
Which in awayte lyth day and night,
That noon of hem may have a sight.
Now moot my sorwe enforced be;
Ful soth it is, that Love yaf me
Three wonder yiftes of his grace,
Which I have lorn now in this place,
Sith they ne may, withoute drede,
Helpen but litel, who taketh hede.
For here availeth no Swete-Thought,
And Swete-Speche helpith right nought.
The thridde was called Swete-Loking,
That now is lorn, without lesing.
The yiftes were fair, but not forthy
They helpe me but simpilly,
But Bialacoil may loosed be,
To gon at large and to be free.
For him my lyf lyth al in dout,
But-if he come the rather out.
Allas! I trowe it wol not been!
For how shuld I evermore him seen?
He may not out, and that is wrong,
Bicause the tour is so strong.
How shulde he out? by whos prowesse,
Out of so strong a forteresse?
By me, certeyn, it nil be do;
God woot, I have no wit therto!
But wel I woot I was in rage,
Whan I to Love dide homage.
Who was in cause, in sothfastnesse,
But hir-silf, dame Idelnesse,
Which me conveyed, thurgh fair prayere,
To entre into that fair vergere?
She was to blame me to leve,
The which now doth me sore greve.
A foolis word is nought to trowe,
Ne worth an appel for to lowe;
Men shulde him snibbe bittirly,
At pryme temps of his foly.

I was a fool, and she me leved,
Thurgh whom I am right nought releved.
She accomplisshed al my wil,
That now me greveth wondir il.
Resoun me seide what shulde falle.
A fool my-silf I may wel calle,
That love asyde I had not leyde,
And trowed that dame Resoun seyde.
Resoun had bothe skile and right,
Whan she me blamed, with al hir might,
To medle of love, that hath me shent;
But certeyn now I wol repent.
'And shulde I repent? Nay, parde!
A fals traitour than shulde I be.
The develles engins wolde me take,
If I my lorde wolde forsake,
Or Bialacoil falsly bitraye.
Shulde I at mischeef hate him? nay,
Sith he now, for his curtesye,
Is in prisoun of Jelousye.
Curtesye certeyn dide he me,
So muche, it may not yolden be,
Whan he the hay passen me lete,
To kisse the rose, faire and swete:
Shulde I therfore cunne him maugree?
Nay, certeynly, it shal not be;
For Love shal never, if god wil,
Here of me, thurgh word or wil,
Offence or complaynt, more or lesse,
Neither of Hope nor Idilnesse;
For certis, it were wrong that I
Hated hem for hir curtesye.
Ther is not ellis, but suffre and thinke,
And waken whan I shulde winke;
Abyde in hope, til Love, thurgh chaunce,
Sende me socour or allegeaunce,
Expectant ay til I may mete
To geten mercy of that swete.
'Whylom I thinke how Love to me
Seyde he wolde taken atte gree

My servise, if unpacience
Caused me to doon offence.
He seyde, "In thank I shal it take,
And high maister eek thee make,
If wikkednesse ne reve it thee;
But sone, I trowe, that shal not be."
These were his wordis by and by;
It semed he loved me trewly.
Now is ther not but serve him wele,
If that I thinke his thank to fele.
My good, myn harm, lyth hool in me;
In Love may no defaute be;
For trewe Love failid never man.
Sothly, the faute mot nedis than
(As God forbede!) be founde in me,
And how it cometh, I can not see.
Now lat it goon as it may go;
Whether Love wol socoure me or slo,
He may do hool on me his wil.
I am so sore bounde him til,
From his servyse I may not fleen;
For lyf and deth, withouten wene,
Is in his hand; I may not chese;
He may me do bothe winne and lese.
And sith so sore he doth me greve,
Yit, if my lust he wolde acheve
To Bialacoil goodly to be,
I yeve no force what felle on me.
For though I dye, as I mot nede,
I praye Love, of his goodlihede,
To Bialacoil do gentilnesse,
For whom I live in such distresse,
That I mote deyen for penaunce.
But first, withoute repentaunce,
I wol me confesse in good entent,
And make in haste my testament,
As lovers doon that felen smerte:—
To Bialacoil leve I myn herte
Al hool, withoute departing,
Or doublenesse of repenting.'

COMENT RAISOUN VIENT A L'AMANT

Thus as I made my passage
In compleynt, and in cruel rage,
And I nist wher to finde a leche
That couthe unto myn helping eche,
Sodeynly agayn comen doun
Out of hir tour I saugh Resoun,
Discrete and wys, and ful plesaunt,
And of hir porte ful avenaunt.
The righte wey she took to me,
Which stood in greet perplexite,
That was posshed in every side,
That I nist where I might abyde,
Til she, demurely sad of chere,
Seide to me as she com nere :—
'Myn owne freend, art thou yit greved?
How is this quarel yit acheved
Of Loves syde? Anoon me telle;
Hast thou not yit of love thy fille?
Art thou not wery of thy servyse
That thee hath pyned in sich wyse?
What joye hast thou in thy loving?
Is it swete or bitter thing?
Canst thou yit chese, lat me see,
What best thy socour mighte be?
'Thou servest a ful noble lord,
That maketh thee thral for thy reward,
Which ay renewith thy turment,
With foly so he hath thee blent.
Thou felle in mischeef thilke day,
Whan thou didest, the sothe to say,
Obeysaunce and eek homage;
Thou wroughtest no-thing as the sage.
Whan thou bicam his liege man,
Thou didist a gret foly than;
Thou wistest not what fel therto,
With what lord thou haddist to do.
If thou haddist him wel knowe,
Thou haddist nought be brought so lowe;

For if thou wistest what it were,
Thou noldist serve him half a yeer,
Not a weke, nor half a day,
Ne yit an hour withoute delay,
Ne never han loved paramours,
His lordship is so ful of shoures.
Knowest him ought?'
L'Amaunt. 'Ye, dame, parde!'
Raisoun. 'Nay, nay.'
L'Amaunt. 'Yes, I.'
Raisoun. 'Wherof, lat see?'
L'Amaunt. 'Of that he seyde I shulde be
Glad to have sich lord as he,
And maister of sich seignory.'
Raisoun. 'Knowist him no more?'
L'Amaunt. 'Nay, certis, I,
Save that he yaf me rewles there,
And wente his wey, I niste where,
And I abood bounde in balaunce.'
Raisoun. 'Lo, there a noble conisaunce!
But I wil that thou knowe him now
Ginning and ende, sith that thou
Art so anguisshous and mate,
Disfigured out of astate;
Ther may no wrecche have more of wo,
Ne caitif noon enduren so.
It were to every man sitting
Of his lord have knowleching.
For if thou knewe him, out of dout,
Lightly thou shulde escapen out
Of the prisoun that marreth thee.'
L'Amaunt. 'Ye, dame! sith my lord is he,
And I his man, maad with myn honde,
I wolde right fayn undirstonde
To knowen of what kinde he be,
If any wolde enforme me.'
Raisoun. 'I wolde,' seid Resoun, 'thee lere,
Sith thou to lerne hast sich desire,
And shewe thee, withouten fable,
A thing that is not demonstrable.

Thou shalt here lerne without science,
And knowe, withoute experience,
The thing that may not knowen be,
Ne wist ne shewid in no degree.
Thou mayst the sothe of it not witen,
Though in thee it were writen.
Thou shalt not knowe therof more
Whyle thou art reuled by his lore;
But unto him that love wol flee,
The knotte may unclosed be,
Which hath to thee, as it is founde,
So long be knet and not unbounde.
Now sette wel thyn entencioun,
To here of love discripcioun.
'Love, it is an hateful pees,
A free acquitaunce, without relees,
A trouthe, fret full of falshede,
A sikernesse, al set in drede;
In herte is a dispeiring hope,
And fulle of hope, it is wanhope;
Wyse woodnesse, and wood resoun,
A swete peril, in to droune,
An hevy birthen, light to bere,
A wikked wawe awey to were.
It is Caribdis perilous,
Disagreable and gracious.
It is discordaunce that can accorde,
And accordaunce to discorde.
It is cunning withoute science,
Wisdom withoute sapience,
Wit withoute discrecioun,
Havoir, withoute possessioun.
It is sike hele and hool siknesse,
A thrust drowned in dronkenesse,
An helthe ful of maladye,
And charitee ful of envye,
An hunger ful of habundaunce,
And a gredy suffisaunce;
Delyt right ful of hevinesse,
And drerihed ful of gladnesse;

Bitter swetnesse and swete errour,
Right evel savoured good savour;
Sinne that pardoun hath withinne,
And pardoun spotted without with sinne;
A peyne also it is, joyous,
And felonye right pitous;
Also pley that selde is stable,
And stedefast stat, right mevable;
A strengthe, weyked to stonde upright,
And feblenesse, ful of might;
Wit unavysed, sage folye,
And joye ful of turmentrye;
A laughter it is, weping ay,
Rest, that traveyleth night and day;
Also a swete helle it is,
And a sorowful Paradys;
A plesaunt gayl and esy prisoun,
And, ful of froste, somer sesoun;
Pryme temps, ful of frostes whyte,
And May, devoide of al delyte,
With seer braunches, blossoms ungrene;
And newe fruyt, fillid with winter tene.
It is a slowe, may not forbere
Ragges, ribaned with gold, to were:
For al-so wel wol love be set
Under ragges as riche rochet;
And eek as wel be amourettes
In mourning blak, as bright burnettes.
For noon is of so mochel prys,
Ne no man founden is so wys,
Ne noon so high is of parage,
Ne no man founde of wit so sage,
No man so hardy ne so wight,
Ne no man of so mochel might,
Noon so fulfilled of bounte,
But he with love may daunted be.
Al the world holdith this way;
Love makith alle to goon miswey,
But it be they of yvel lyf,
Whom Genius cursith, man and wyf,

That wrongly werke ageyn nature.
Noon suche I love, ne have no cure
Of suche as Loves servaunts been,
And wol not by my counsel fleen.
For I ne preyse that loving,
Wher-thurgh man, at the laste ending,
Shal calle hem wrecchis fulle of wo,
Love greveth hem and shendith so.
But if thou wolt wel Love eschewe,
For to escape out of his mewe,
And make al hool thy sorwe to slake,
No bettir counsel mayst thou take,
Than thinke to fleen wel, y-wis;
May nought helpe elles; for wite thou this: —
If thou flee it, it shal flee thee;
Folowe it, and folowen shal it thee.'

L'Amaunt. Whan I hadde herd al Resoun seyn,
Which hadde spilt hir speche in veyn:
'Dame,' seyde I, 'I dar wel say
Of this avaunt me wel I may
That from your scole so deviaunt
I am, that never the more avaunt
Right nought am I, thurgh your doctryne;
I dulle under your disciplyne;
I wot no more than I wist er,
To me so contrarie and so fer
Is every thing that ye me lere;
And yit I can it al parcuere.
Myn herte foryetith therof right nought,
It is so writen in my thought;
And depe graven it is so tendir
That al by herte I can it rendre,
And rede it over comunely;
But to my-silf lewedist am I.

'But sith ye love discreven so,
And lakke and preise it, bothe two,
Defyneth it into this letter,
That I may thenke on it the better
For I herde never diffyne it ere,
And wilfully I wolde it lere.'

Raisoun. 'If love be serched wel and sought,
It is a sykenesse of the thought
Annexed and knet bitwixe tweyne,
Which male and female, with oo cheyne,
So frely byndith, that they nil twinne,
Whether so therof they lese or winne.
The roote springith, thurgh hoot brenning,
Into disordinat desiring
For to kissen and enbrace,
And at her lust them to solace.
Of other thing love recchith nought,
But setteth hir herte and al hir thought
More for delectacioun
Than any procreacioun
Of other fruyt by engendring;
Which love to god is not plesing;
For of hir body fruyt to get
They yeve no force, they are so set
Upon delyt, to pley in-fere.
And somme have also this manere,
To feynen hem for love seke;
Sich love I preise not at a leke.
For paramours they do but feyne;
To love truly they disdeyne.
They falsen ladies traitoursly,
And sweren hem othes utterly,
With many a lesing, and many a fable,
And al they finden deceyvable.
And, whanne they her lust han geten,
The hoote ernes they al foryeten.
Wimmen, the harm they byen ful sore;
But men this thenken evermore,
That lasse harm is, so mote I thee,
Disceyve them, than disceyved be;
And namely, wher they ne may
Finde non other mene wey.
For I wot wel, in sothfastnesse,
That who doth now his bisynesse
With any womman for to dele,
For any lust that he may fele,

But-if it be for engendrure,
He doth trespasse, I you ensure.
For he shulde setten al his wil
To geten a likly thing him til,
And to sustenen, if he might,
And kepe forth, by kindes right,
His owne lyknesse and semblable,
For bicause al is corumpable,
And faile shulde successioun,
Ne were ther generacioun
Our sectis strene for to save.
Whan fader or moder arn in grave,
Hir children shulde, whan they ben deede,
Ful diligent ben, in hir steede,
To use that werke on such a wyse,
That oon may thurgh another ryse.
Therfore set Kinde therin delyt,
For men therin shulde hem delyte,
And of that dede be not erke,
But ofte sythes haunt that werke.
For noon wolde drawe therof a draught
Ne were delyt, which hath him caught.
This hadde sotil dame Nature;
For noon goth right, I thee ensure,
Ne hath entent hool ne parfyt;
For hir desir is for delyt,
The which fortened crece and eke
The pley of love for-ofte seke,
And thralle hem-silf, they be so nyce,
Unto the prince of every vyce.
For of ech sinne it is the rote,
Unlefulle lust, though it be sote,
And of al yvel the racyne,
As Tullius can determyne,
Which in his tyme was ful sage,
In a boke he made of Age,
Wher that more he preyseth Elde,
Though he be croked and unwelde,
And more of commendacioun,
Than Youthe in his discripcioun.

For Youthe set bothe man and wyf
In al perel of soule and lyf;
And perel is, but men have grace,
The tyme of youthe for to pace,
Withoute any deth or distresse,
It is so ful of wildenesse;
So ofte it doth shame or damage
To him or to his linage.
It ledith man now up, now doun,
In mochel dissolucioun,
And makith him love yvel company,
And lede his lyf disrewlily,
And halt him payed with noon estate.
Within him-silf is such debate,
He chaungith purpos and entent,
And yalt him into som covent,
To liven aftir her empryse,
And lesith fredom and fraunchyse,
That Nature in him hadde set,
The which ageyn he may not get,
If he there make his mansioun
For to abyde professioun.
Though for a tyme his herte absente,
It may not fayle, he shal repente,
And eke abyde thilke day
To leve his abit, and goon his way,
And lesith his worship and his name,
And dar not come ageyn for shame;
But al his lyf he doth so mourne,
Because he dar not hoom retourne.
Fredom of kinde so lost hath he
That never may recured be,
But-if that god him graunte grace
That he may, er he hennes pace,
Conteyne undir obedience
Thurgh the vertu of pacience.
For Youthe set man in al folye,
In unthrift and in ribaudye,
In leccherye, and in outrage,
So ofte it chaungith of corage.

Youthe ginneth ofte sich bargeyn,
That may not ende withouten peyn.
In gret perel is set youth-hede,
Delyt so doth his bridil lede.
Delyt thus hangith, drede thee nought,
Bothe mannis body and his thought,
Only thurgh Youthe, his chamberere,
That to don yvel is customere,
And of nought elles taketh hede
But only folkes for to lede
Into disporte and wildenesse,
So is she froward from sadnesse.

'But Elde drawith hem therfro;
Who wot it nought, he may wel go
Demand of hem that now arn olde,
That whylom Youthe hadde in holde,
Which yit remembre of tendir age,
How it hem brought in many a rage,
And many a foly therin wrought.
But now that Elde hath hem thurgh-sought,
They repente hem of her folye,
That Youthe hem putte in jupardye,
In perel and in muche wo,
And made hem ofte amis to do,
And suen yvel companye,
Riot and avouterye.

'But Elde can ageyn restreyne
From suche foly, and refreyne,
And set men, by hir ordinaunce,
In good reule and in governaunce.
But yvel she spendith hir servyse,
For no man wol hir love, ne pryse;
She is hated, this wot I wele.
Hir acqueyntaunce wolde no man fele,
Ne han of Elde companye,
Men hate to be of hir alye.
For no man wolde bicomen olde,
Ne dye, whan he is yong and bolde.
And Elde merveilith right gretly,
Whan they remembre hem inwardly

Of many a perelous empryse,
Whiche that they wrought in sondry wyse,
How ever they might, withoute blame,
Escape awey withoute shame,
In youthe, withouten damage
Or repreef of hir linage,
Losse of membre, sheding of blode,
Perel of deth, or losse of good.
'Wost thou nought where Youthe abit,
That men so preisen in hir wit?
With Delyt she halt sojour,
For bothe they dwellen in oo tour.
As longe as Youthe is in sesoun,
They dwellen in oon mansioun.
Delyt of Youthe wol have servyse
To do what so he wol devyse;
And Youthe is redy evermore
For to obey, for smerte of sore,
Unto Delyt, and him to yive
Hir servise, whyl that she may live.
'Where Elde abit, I wol thee telle
Shortly, and no whyle dwelle,
For thider bihoveth thee to go.
If Deth in youthe thee not slo,
Of this journey thou maist not faile.
With hir Labour and Travaile
Logged been, with Sorwe and Wo,
That never out of hir courte go.
Peyne and Distresse, Syknesse and Ire,
And Malencoly, that angry sire,
Ben of hir paleys senatours;
Groning and Grucching, hir herbergeours,
The day and night, hir to turment,
With cruel Deth they hir present,
And tellen hir, erliche and late,
That Deth stant armed at hir gate.
Than bringe they to hir remembraunce
The foly dedis of hir infaunce,
Which causen hir to mourne in wo
That Youthe hath hir bigiled so,

Which sodeynly awey is hasted.
She wepeth the tyme that she hath wasted,
Compleyning of the preterit,
And the present, that not abit,
And of hir olde vanitee,
That, but aforn hir she may see
In the future som socour,
To leggen hir of hir dolour,
To graunt hir tyme of repentaunce,
For hir sinnes to do penaunce,
And at the laste so hir governe
To winne the joy that is eterne,
Fro which go bakward Youthe hir made,
In vanitee to droune and wade.
For present tyme abidith nought,
It is more swift than any thought;
So litel whyle it doth endure
That ther nis compte ne mesure.
'But how that ever the game go,
Who list have joye and mirth also
Of love, be it he or she,
High or lowe, whoso it be,
In fruyt they shulde hem delyte;
Her part they may not elles quyte,
To save hem-silf in honestee.
And yit ful many oon I see
Of wimmen, sothly for to seyne,
That ay desire and wolde fayne
The pley of love, they be so wilde,
And not coveite to go with childe.
And if with child they be perchaunce,
They wole it holde a gret mischaunce;
But what-som-ever wo they fele,
They wol not pleyne, but concele;
But-if it be any fool or nyce,
In whom that shame hath no justyce.
For to delyt echon they drawe,
That haunte this werk, bothe high and lawe,
Save sich that aren worth right nought,
That for money wol be bought.

Such love I preise in no wyse,
Whan it is given for coveitise.
I preise no womman, though she be wood,
That yeveth hir-silf for any good.
For litel shulde a man telle
Of hir, that wol hir body selle,
Be she mayde, be she wyf,
That quik wol selle hir, by hir lyf.
How faire chere that ever she make,
He is a wrecche, I undirtake,
That loveth such one, for swete or sour,
Though she him calle hir paramour,
And laugheth on him, and makith him feeste.
For certeynly no suche a beeste
To be loved is not worthy,
Or bere the name of druery.
Noon shulde hir please, but he were wood
That wol dispoile him of his good.
Yit nevertheles, I wol not sey
But she, for solace and for pley,
May a jewel or other thing
Take of her loves free yeving;
But that she aske it in no wyse,
For drede of shame of coveityse.
And she of hirs may him, certeyn,
Withoute sclaundre, yeven ageyn,
And joyne her hertes togidre so
In love, and take and yeve also.
Trowe not that I wolde hem twinne,
Whan in her love ther is no sinne;
I wol that they togedre go,
And doon al that they han ado,
As curteis shulde and debonaire,
And in her love beren hem faire,
Withoute vyce, bothe he and she;
So that alwey, in honestee,
Fro foly love they kepe hem clere
That brenneth hertis with his fere;
And that her love, in any wyse,
Be devoid of coveityse.

Good love shulde engendrid be
Of trewe herte, just, and secree,
And not of such as sette her thought
To have her lust, and ellis nought,
So are they caught in Loves lace,
Truly, for bodily solace.
Fleshly delyt is so present
With thee, that sette al thyn entent,
Withoute more (what shulde I glose?)
For to gete and have the Rose;
Which makith thee so mate and wood
That thou desirest noon other good.
But thou art not an inche the nerre,
But ever abydest in sorwe and werre,
As in thy face it is sene;
It makith thee bothe pale and lene;
Thy might, thy vertu goth away.
A sory gest, in goode fay,
Thou herberedest than in thyn inne,
The God of Love whan thou let inne!
Wherfore I rede, thou shette him out,
Or he shal greve thee, out of doute;
For to thy profit it wol turne,
If he nomore with thee sojourne.
In gret mischeef and sorwe sonken
Ben hertis, that of love arn dronken,
As thou peraventure knowen shal,
Whan thou hast lost thy tyme al,
And spent thy youthe in ydilnesse,
In waste, and woful lustinesse;
If thou maist live the tyme to see
Of love for to delivered be,
Thy tyme thou shalt biwepe sore
The whiche never thou maist restore
(For tyme lost, as men may see,
For no-thing may recured be).
And if thou scape yit, atte laste,
Fro Love, that hath thee so faste
Knit and bounden in his lace,
Certeyn, I holde it but a grace.

For many oon, as it is seyn,
Have lost, and spent also in veyn,
In his servyse, withoute socour,
Body and soule, good, and tresour,
Wit, and strengthe, and eke richesse,
Of which they hadde never redresse.'
  Thus taught and preched hath Resoun,
But Love spilte hir sermoun,
That was so imped in my thought,
That hir doctrine I sette at nought.
And yit ne seide she never a dele,
That I ne understode it wele,
Word by word, the mater al.
But unto Love I was so thral,
Which callith over-al his pray,
He chasith so my thought alway,
And holdith myn herte undir his sele,
As trust and trew as any stele;
So that no devocioun
Ne hadde I in the sermoun
Of dame Resoun, ne of hir rede;
It toke no sojour in myn hede.
For alle yede out at oon ere
That in that other she dide lere;
Fully on me she lost hir lore,
Hir speche me greved wondir sore.
  Than unto hir for ire I seide,
For anger, as I dide abraide:
'Dame, and is it your wille algate,
That I not love, but that I hate
Alle men, as ye me teche?
For if I do aftir your speche,
Sith that ye seyn love is not good,
Than must I nedis say with mood,
If I it leve, in hatrede ay
Liven, and voide love away
From me, and been a sinful wrecche,
Hated of all that love that tecche.
I may not go noon other gate,
For either must I love or hate.

And if I hate men of-newe
More than love, it wole me rewe,
As by your preching semeth me,
For Love no-thing ne preisith thee.
Ye yeve good counseil, sikirly,
That prechith me al-day, that I
Shulde not Loves lore alowe;
He were a fool, wolde you not trowe!
In speche also ye han me taught
Another love, that knowen is naught,
Which I have herd you not repreve,
To love ech other; by your leve,
If ye wolde diffyne it me,
I wolde gladly here, to see,
At the leest, if I may lere
Of sondry loves the manere.'

Raisoun. 'Certis, freend, a fool art thou
Whan that thou no-thing wolt allowe
That I thee for thy profit say.
Yit wol I sey thee more, in fay;
For I am redy, at the leste,
To accomplisshe thy requeste,
But I not wher it wol avayle;
In veyne, perauntre, I shal travayle.
Love ther is in sondry wyse,
As I shal thee here devyse.
For som love leful is and good;
I mene not that which makith thee wood,
And bringith thee in many a fit,
And ravisshith fro thee al thy wit,
It is so merveilous and queynt;
With such love be no more aqueynt.

Comment Raisoun diffinist Amistie

'Love of Frendshipe also ther is,
Which makith no man doon amis,
Of wille knit bitwixe two,
That wol not breke for wele ne wo;
Which long is lykly to contune,
Whan wille and goodis ben in comune;

Grounded by goddis ordinaunce,
Hool, withoute discordaunce;
With hem holding comuntee
Of al her goode in charitee,
That ther be noon excepcioun
Thurgh chaunging of entencioun;
That ech helpe other at hir neede,
And wysly hele bothe word and dede;
Trewe of mening, devoid of slouthe,
For wit is nought withoute trouthe;
So that the ton dar al his thought
Seyn to his freend, and spare nought,
As to him-silf, without dreding
To be discovered by wreying.
For glad is that conjuncciouu,
Whan ther is noon suspecioun
Ne lak in hem, whom they wolde prove
That trew and parfit weren in love.
For no man may be amiable,
But-if he be so ferme and stable,
That fortune chaunge him not, ne blinde,
But that his freend alwey him finde,
Bothe pore and riche, in oon estate.
For if his freend, thurgh any gate,
Wol compleyne of his povertee,
He shulde not byde so long, til he
Of his helping him requere;
For good deed, don but thurgh prayere,
Is sold, and bought to dere, y-wis,
To hert that of gret valour is.
For hert fulfilled of gentilnesse
Can yvel demene his distresse.
And man that worthy is of name
To asken often hath gret shame.
A good man brenneth in his thought
For shame, whan he axeth ought.
He hath gret thought, and dredith ay
For his disese, whan he shal pray
His freend, lest that he warned be,
Til that he preve his stabiltee.

But whan that he hath founden oon
That trusty is and trew as stone,
And hath assayed him at al,
And found him stedefast as a wal,
And of his freendship be certeyne,
He shal him shewe bothe joye and peyne,
And al that he dar thinke or sey,
Withoute shame, as he wel may.
For how shulde he ashamed be
Of sich oon as I tolde thee?
For whan he woot his secree thought,
The thridde shal knowe ther-of right nought;
For tweyn in nombre is bet than three
In every counsel and secree.
Repreve he dredeth never a del,
Who that biset his wordis wel;
For every wys man, out of drede,
Can kepe his tunge til he see nede;
And fooles can not holde hir tunge;
A fooles belle is sone runge.
Yit shal a trewe freend do more
To helpe his felowe of his sore,
And socoure him, whan he hath nede,
In al that he may doon in dede;
And gladder be that he him plesith
Than is his felowe that he esith.
And if he do not his requeste,
He shal as mochel him moleste
As his felow, for that he
May not fulfille his voluntee
As fully as he hath requered.
If bothe hertis Love hath fered,
Joy and wo they shul depart,
And take evenly ech his part.
Half his anoy he shal have ay,
And comfort him what that he may;
And of his blisse parte shal he,
If love wol departed be.
'And whilom of this amitee
Spak Tullius in a ditee;

"A man shulde maken his request
Unto his freend, that is honest;
And he goodly shulde it fulfille,
But it the more were out of skile,
And otherwise not graunt therto,
Except only in cases two:
If men his freend to deth wolde dryve,
Lat him be bisy to save his lyve.
Also if men wolen him assayle,
Of his wurship to make him faile,
And hindren him of his renoun,
Lat him, with ful entencioun,
His dever doon in ech degree
That his freend ne shamed be,
In this two cases with his might,
Taking no kepe to skile nor right,
As ferre as love may him excuse;
This oughte no man to refuse."
This love that I have told to thee
Is no-thing contrarie to me;
This wol I that thou folowe wel,
And leve the tother everydel.
This love to vertu al attendith,
The tothir fooles blent and shendith.
'Another love also there is,
That is contrarie unto this,
Which desyre is so constreyned
That it is but wille feyned;
Awey fro trouthe it doth so varie,
That to good love it is contrarie;
For it maymeth, in many wyse,
Syke hertis with coveityse;
Al in winning and in profyt
Sich love settith his delyt.
This love so hangeth in balaunce
That, if it lese his hope, perchaunce,
Of lucre, that he is set upon,
It wol faile, and quenche anon;
For no man may be amorous,
Ne in his living vertuous,

But-if he love more, in mood,
Men for hem-silf than for hir good.
For love that profit doth abyde
Is fals, and bit not in no tyde.
This love cometh of dame Fortune,
That litel whyle wol contune ;
For it shal chaungen wonder sone,
And take eclips right as the mone,
Whan she is from us y-let
Thurgh erthe, that bitwixe is set
The sonne and hir, as it may falle,
Be it in party, or in alle ;
The shadowe maketh her bemis merke,
And hir hornes to shewe derke,
That part where she hath lost the lyght
Of Phebus fully, and the sight ;
Til, whan the shadowe is overpast,
She is enlumined ageyn as faste,
Thurgh brightnesse of the sonne bemes
That yeveth to hir ageyn hir lemes.
That love is right of sich nature ;
Now is it fair, and now obscure,
Now bright, now clipsy of manere,
And whylom dim, and whylom clere.
As sone as Poverte ginneth take,
With mantel and with wedis blake
It hidith of Love the light awey,
That into night it turneth day ;
It may not see Richesse shyne
Til the blakke shadowes fyne.
For, whan Richesse shyneth bright,
Love recovereth ageyn his light ;
And whan it failith, he wol flit,
And as she groweth, so groweth it.
'Of this love, here what I sey :—
The riche men are loved ay,
And namely tho that sparand bene,
That wol not wasshe hir hertes clene
Of the filthe, nor of the vyce
Of gredy brenning avaryce.

The riche man ful fond is, y-wis,
That weneth that he loved is.
If that his herte it undirstood,
It is not he, it is his good;
He may wel witen in his thought,
His good is loved, and he right nought.
For if he be a nigard eke,
Men wole not sette by him a leke,
But haten him; this is the soth.
Lo, what profit his catel doth!
Of every man that may him see,
It geteth him nought but enmitee
But he amende him of that vyce,
And knowe him-silf, he is not wys.
'Certis, he shulde ay freendly be,
To gete him love also ben free,
Or ellis he is not wyse ne sage
No more than is a gote ramage.
That he not loveth, his dede proveth,
Whan he his richesse so wel loveth,
That he wol hyde it ay and spare,
His pore freendis seen forfare;
To kepe it ay is his purpose,
Til for drede his eyen close,
And til a wikked deth him take;
Him hadde lever asondre shake,
And late his limes asondre ryve,
Than leve his richesse in his lyve.
He thenkith parte it with no man;
Certayn, no love is in him than.
How shulde love within him be,
Whan in his herte is no pite?
That he trespasseth, wel I wat,
For ech man knowith his estat;
For wel him oughte be reproved
That loveth nought, ne is not loved.
'But sith we arn to Fortune comen,
And han our sermoun of hir nomen,
A wondir wil I telle thee now,
Thou herdist never sich oon, I trow.

I not wher thou me leven shal,
Though sothfastnesse it be in al,
As it is writen, and is sooth,
That unto men more profit doth
The froward Fortune and contraire,
Than the swote and debonaire:
And if thee thinke it is doutable,
It is thurgh argument provable.
For the debonaire and softe
Falsith and bigylith ofte;
For liche a moder she can cherishe
And milken as doth a norys;
And of hir goode to hem deles,
And yeveth hem part of her joweles,
With grete richesse and dignitee;
And hem she hoteth stabilitee
In a state that is not stable,
But chaunging ay and variable;
And fedith hem with glorie veyne,
And worldly blisse noncerteyne.
Whan she hem settith on hir whele,
Than wene they to be right wele,
And in so stable state withalle,
That never they wene for to falle.
And whan they set so highe be,
They wene to have in certeintee
Of hertly frendis so gret noumbre,
That no-thing mighte her stat encombre;
They truste hem so on every syde,
Wening with hem they wolde abyde
In every perel and mischaunce,
Withoute chaunge or variaunce,
Bothe of catel and of good;
And also for to spende hir blood
And alle hir membris for to spille,
Only to fulfille hir wille.
They maken it hole in many wyse,
And hoten hem hir ful servyse,
How sore that it do hem smerte,
Into hir very naked sherte!

Herte and al, so hole they yeve,
For the tyme that they may live,
So that, with her flaterye,
They maken foolis glorifye
Of hir wordis greet speking,
And han there-of a rejoysing,
And trowe hem as the Evangyle;
And it is al falsheed and gyle,
As they shal afterwardes see,
Whan they arn falle in povertee,
And been of good and catel bare;
Than shulde they seen who freendis ware.
For of an hundred, certeynly,
Nor of a thousand ful scarsly,
Ne shal they fynde unnethis oon,
Whan povertee is comen upon.
For this Fortune that I of telle,
With men whan hir lust to dwelle,
Makith hem to lese hir conisaunce,
And nourishith hem in ignoraunce.
'But froward Fortune and perverse,
Whan high estatis she doth reverse,
And maketh hem to tumble doun
Of hir whele, with sodeyn tourn,
And from hir richesse doth hem flee,
And plongeth hem in povertee,
As a stepmoder envyous,
And leyeth a plastre dolorous
Unto her hertis, wounded egre,
Which is not tempred with vinegre,
But with poverte and indigence,
She sheweth, by experience,
That she is Fortune verely
In whom no man shulde affy,
Nor in hir yeftis have fiaunce,
She is so ful of variaunce.
Thus can she maken high and lowe,
Whan they from richesse aren throwe,
Fully to knowen, withouten were,
Freend of effect, and freend of chere;

And which in love weren trew and stable,
And whiche also weren variable,
After Fortune, hir goddesse,
In poverte, outher in richesse;
For al she yeveth, out of drede,
Unhappe bereveth it in dede;
For Infortune lat not oon
Of freendis, whan Fortune is goon;
I mene tho freendis that wol flee
Anoon as entreth povertee.
And yit they wol not leve hem so,
But in ech place where they go
They calle hem "wrecche," scorne and blame,
And of hir mishappe hem diffame,
And, namely, siche as in richesse
Pretendith most of stablenesse,
Whan that they sawe him set onlofte,
And weren of him socoured ofte,
And most y-holpe in al hir nede:
But now they take no maner hede,
But seyn, in voice of flaterye,
That now apperith hir folye,
Over-al wher-so they fare,
And singe, "Go, farewel feldefare."
Alle suche freendis I beshrewe,
For of the trewe ther be to fewe;
But sothfast freendis, what so bityde,
In every fortune wolen abyde;
They han hir hertis in suche noblesse
That they nil love for no richesse;
Nor, for that Fortune may hem sende,
They wolen hem socoure and defende;
And chaunge for softe ne for sore,
For who is freend, loveth evermore.
Though men drawe swerd his freend to slo,
He may not hewe hir love atwo.
But, in the case that I shal sey,
For pride and ire lese it he may,
And for reprove by nycetee,
And discovering of privitee,

With tonge wounding, as feloun,
Thurgh venemous detraccioun.
Frend in this case wol gon his way,
For no-thing greve him more ne may;
And for nought ellis wol he flee,
If that he love in stabilitee.
And certeyn, he is wel bigoon
Among a thousand that fyndith oon.
For ther may be no richesse,
Ageyns frendship, of worthinesse;
For it ne may so high atteigne
As may the valoure, sooth to seyne,
Of him that loveth trew and wel;
Frendship is more than is catel.
For freend in court ay better is
Than peny in his purs, certis;
And Fortune, mishapping,
Whan upon men she is falling,
Thurgh misturning of hir chaunce,
And casteth hem oute of balaunce,
She makith, thurgh hir adversitee,
Men ful cleerly for to see
Him that is freend in existence
From him that is by apparence.
For Infortune makith anoon
To knowe thy freendis fro thy foon,
By experience, right as it is;
The which is more to preyse, y-wis,
Than is miche richesse and tresour;
For more doth profit and valour
Poverte, and such adversitee,
Bifore than doth prosperitee;
For the toon yeveth conisaunce,
And the tother ignoraunce.

'And thus in poverte is in dede
Trouthe declared fro falsehede;
For feynte frendis it wol declare,
And trewe also, what wey they fare.
For whan he was in his richesse,
These freendis, ful of doublenesse,

Offrid him in many wyse
Hert and body, and servyse.
What wolde he than ha yeve to ha bought
To knowen openly her thought,
That he now hath so clerly seen?
The lasse bigyled he sholde have been
And he hadde than perceyved it,
But richesse nold not late him wit.
Wel more avauntage doth him than,
Sith that it makith him a wys man,
The greet mischeef that he receyveth,
Than doth richesse that him deceyveth.
Richesse riche ne makith nought
Him that on tresour set his thought;
For richesse stont in suffisaunce
And no-thing in habundaunce;
For suffisaunce al-only
Makith men to live riehely.
For he that hath but miches tweyne,
Ne more value in his demeigne,
Liveth more at ese, and more is riche,
Than doth he that is so chiche,
And in his bern hath, soth to seyn,
An hundred muwis of whete greyn,
Though he be chapman or marchaunt,
And have of golde many besaunt.
For in the geting he hath such wo,
And in the keping drede also,
And set evermore his bisynesse
For to encrese, and not to lesse,
For to augment and multiply.
And though on hepis it lye him by,
Yit never shal make his richesse
Asseth unto his gredinesse.
But the povre that recchith nought,
Save of his lyflode, in his thought,
Which that he getith with his travaile,
He dredith nought that it shal faile,
Though he have lytel worldis good,
Mete and drinke, and esy food,

Upon his travel and living,
And also suffisaunt clothing.
Or if in syknesse that he falle,
And lothe mete and drink withalle,
Though he have nought, his mete to by,
He shal bithinke him hastely,
To putte him out of al daunger,
That he of mete hath no mister;
Or that he may with litel eke
Be founden, whyl that he is seke;
Or that men shul him bere in hast,
To live, til his syknesse be past,
To somme maysondewe bisyde;
He cast nought what shal him bityde.
He thenkith nought that ever he shal
Into any syknesse falle.

'And though it falle, as it may be,
That al betyme spare shal he
As mochel as shal to him suffyce,
Whyl he is syke in any wyse,
He doth it, for that he wol be
Content with his povertee
Withoute nede of any man.
So miche in litel have he can,
He is apayed with his fortune;
And for he nil be importune
Unto no wight, ne onerous,
Nor of hir goodes coveitous;
Therfore he spareth, it may wel been,
His pore estat for to sustene.

'Or if him lust not for to spare,
But suffrith forth, as nought ne ware,
Atte last it hapneth, as it may,
Right unto his laste day,
And taketh the world as it wolde be;
For ever in herte thenkith he,
The soner that the deeth him slo,
To paradys the soner go
He shal, there for to live in blisse,
Where that he shal no good misse.

Thider he hopith god shal him sende
Aftir his wrecchid lyves ende.
Pictagoras himsilf reherses,
In a book that the Golden Verses
Is clepid, for the nobilitee
Of the honourable ditee :—
"Than, whan thou gost thy body fro,
Free in the eir thou shalt up go,
And leven al humanitee,
And purely live in deitee."—
He is a fool, withouten were,
That trowith have his countre here,
"In erthe is not our countree,"
That may these clerkis seyn and see
In Boece of Consolacioun,
Where it is maked mencioun
Of our countree pleyn at the eye,
By teching of philosophye,
Where lewid men might lere wit,
Who-so that wolde translaten it.
If he be sich that can wel live
Aftir his rente may him yive,
And not desyreth more to have,
That may fro povertee him save :
A wys man seide, as we may seen,
Is no man wreeched, but he it wene,
Be he king, knight, or ribaud.
And many a ribaud is mery and baud,
That swinkith, and berith, bothe day and night,
Many a burthen of gret might,
The whiche doth him lasse offense,
For he suffrith in pacience.
They laugh and daunce, trippe and singe,
And ley not up for her living,
But in the tavern al dispendith
The winning that god hem sendith.
Than goth he, fardels for to bere,
With as good chere as he dide ere ;
To swinke and traveile he not feynith,

For for to robben he disdeynith ;
But right anoon, aftir his swinke,
He goth to tavern for to drinke.
Alle these ar riche in abundaunce,
That can thus have suffisaunce
Wel more than can an usurere,
As god wel knowith, withoute were.
For an usurer, so god me see,
Shal never for richesse riche bee,
But evermore pore and indigent,
Scarce, and gredy in his entent.
'For soth it is, whom it displese,
Ther may no marchaunt live at ese ;
His herte in sich a were is set,
That it quik brenneth more to get,
Ne never shal enough have geten ;
Though he have gold in gerners yeten,
For to be nedy he dredith sore.
Wherfore to geten more and more
He set his herte and his desire ;
So hote he brennith in the fire
Of coveitise, that makith him wood
To purchase other mennes good.
He undirfongith a gret peyne,
That undirtakith to drinke up Seyne ;
For the more he drinkith, ay
The more he leveth, the soth to say.
That is the thurst of fals geting,
That last ever in coveiting,
And the anguisshe and distresse
With the fire of gredinesse.
She fighteth with him ay, and stryveth,
That his herte asondre ryveth ;
Such gredinesse him assaylith,
That whan he most hath, most he faylith.
'Phisiciens and advocates
Gon right by the same yates ;
They selle hir science for winning,
And haunte hir crafte for greet geting.
Hir winning is of such swetnesse,

That if a man falle in sikenesse,
They are ful glad, for hir encrese ;
For by hir wille, withoute lees,
Everiche man shulde be seke,
And though they dye, they set not a leke.
After, whan they the gold have take,
Ful litel care for hem they make.
They wolde that fourty were seke at onis,
Ye, two hundred, in flesh and bonis,
And yit two thousand, as I gesse,
For to encresen her richesse.
They wol not worchen, in no wyse,
But for lucre and coveityse ;
For fysyk ginneth first by *fy*,
The fysycien also sothely ;
And sithen it goth fro *fy* to *sy* ;
To truste on hem, it is foly ;
For they nil, in no maner gree,
Do right nought for charitee.
'Eke in the same secte are set
Alle tho that prechen for to get
Worshipes, honour, and richesse.
Her hertis arn in greet distresse,
That folk ne live not holily.
But aboven al, specialy,
Sich as prechen for veynglorie,
And toward god have no memorie,
But forth as ypocrites trace,
And to her soules deth purchace,
And outward shewen holynesse,
Though they be fulle of cursidnesse.
Not liche to the apostles twelve,
They deceyve other and hem-selve ;
Bigyled is the gyler than.
For preching of a cursed man,
Though it to other may profyte,
Himsilf availeth not a myte ;
For oft good predicacioun
Cometh of evel entencioun.
To him not vailith his preching,

Al helpe he other with his teching;
For where they good ensaumple take,
There is he with veynglorie shake.
'But lat us leven these prechoures,
And speke of hem that in her toures
Hepe up her gold, and faste shette,
And sore theron her herte sette.
They neither love god, ne drede
They kepe more than it is nede,
And in her bagges sore it binde,
Out of the sonne, and of the winde;
They putte up more than nede ware,
Whan they seen pore folk forfare,
For hunger dye, and for cold quake;
God can wel vengeaunce therof take.
Three gret mischeves hem assailith,
And thus in gadring ay travaylith;
With moche peyne they winne richesse;
And drede hem holdith in distresse,
To kepe that they gadre faste;
With sorwe they leve it at the laste;
With sorwe they bothe dye and live,
That to richesse her hertis yive,
And in defaute of love it is,
As it shewith ful wel, y-wis.
For if these gredy, the sothe to seyn,
Loveden, and were loved ageyn,
And good love regned over-alle,
Such wikkidnesse ne shulde falle;
But he shulde yeve that most good had
To hem that weren in nede bistad,
And live withoute fals usure,
For charitee ful clene and pure.
If they hem yeve to goodnesse,
Defending hem from ydelnesse,
In al this world than pore noon
We shulde finde, I trowe, not oon.
But chaunged is this world unstable;
For love is over-al vendable.
We see that no man loveth now

But for winning and for prow ;
And love is thralled in servage
Whan it is sold for avauntage ;
Yit wommen wol hir bodies selle ;
Suche soules goth to the devel of helle.'

FRAGMENT C

Whan Love had told hem his entente,
The baronage to councel wente ;
In many sentences they fille,
And dyversly they seide hir wille :
But aftir discord they accorded,
And hir accord to Love recorded.
'Sir,' seiden they, 'we been at oon,
By even accord of everichoon,
Out-take Richesse al-only,
That sworen hath ful hauteynly,
That she the castel nil assaile,
Ne smyte a stroke in this bataile,
With dart, ne mace, spere, ne knyf,
For man that speketh or bereth the lyf,
And blameth your empryse, y-wis,
And from our hoost departed is,
(At leeste wey, as in this plyte,)
So hath she this man in dispyte ;
For she seith he ne loved hir never,
And therfor she wol hate him ever.
For he wol gadre no tresore,
He hath hir wrath for evermore.
He agilte hir never in other caas,
Lo, here al hoolly his trespas !
She seith wel, that this other day
He asked hir leve to goon the way
That is clepid To-moche-Yeving,
And spak ful faire in his praying ;

But whan he prayde hir, pore was he,
Therfore she warned him the entree.
Ne yit is he not thriven so
That he hath geten a peny or two,
That quitly is his owne in hold.
Thus hath Richesse us alle told ;
And whan Richesse us this recorded,
Withouten hir we been accorded.
'And we finde in our accordaunce,
That False-Semblant and Abstinaunce,
With alle the folk of hir bataile,
Shulle at the hinder gate assayle,
That Wikkid-Tunge hath in keping,
With his Normans, fulle of jangling.
And with hem Curtesie and Largesse,
That shulle shewe hir hardinesse
To the olde wyf that kepeth so harde
Fair-Welcoming within her warde.
Than shal Delyte and Wel-Helinge
Fonde Shame adoun to bringe ;
With al hir hoost, erly and late,
They shulle assailen thilke gate.
Agaynes Drede shal Hardinesse
Assayle, and also Sikernesse,
With al the folk of hir leding,
That never wist what was fleing.
'Fraunchyse shal fighte, and eek Pitee,
With Daunger ful of crueltee.
Thus is your hoost ordeyned wel ;
Doun shal the castel every del,
If everiche do his entente,
So that Venus be presente,
Your moder, ful of vassalage,
That can y-nough of such usage ;
Withouten hir may no wight spede
This werk, neither for word ne dede.
Therfore is good ye for hir sende,
For thurgh hir may this werk amende.'
Amour. 'Lordinges, my moder, the goddesse,
That is my lady, and my maistresse,

Nis not at al at my willing,
Ne doth not al my desyring.
Yit can she som-tyme doon labour,
Whan that hir lust, in my socour,
Al my nedes for to acheve,
But now I thenke hir not to greve.
My moder is she, and of childhede
I bothe worshipe hir, and eek drede;
For who that dredeth sire ne dame
Shal it abye in body or name.
And, natheles, yit cunne we
Sende after hir, if nede be;
And were she nigh, she comen wolde,
I trowe that no-thing might hir holde.
'My moder is of greet prowesse;
She hath tan many a forteresse,
That cost hath many a pound er this,
Ther I nas not present, y-wis;
And yit men seide it was my dede;
But I come never in that stede;
Ne me ne lyketh, so mote I thee,
Such toures take withoute me.
For-why me thenketh that, in no wyse,
It may ben cleped but marchandise.
'Go bye a courser, blak or whyte,
And pay therfor; than art thou quyte.
The marchaunt oweth thee right nought,
Ne thou him, whan thou hast it bought.
I wol not selling clepe yeving,
For selling axeth no guerdoning;
Here lyth no thank, ne no meryte,
That oon goth from that other al quyte.
But this selling is not semblable;
For, whan his hors is in the stable,
He may it selle ageyn, pardee,
And winne on it, such hap may be;
Al may the man not lese, y-wis,
For at the leest the skin is his.
Or elles, if it so bityde
That he wol kepe his hors to ryde,

Yit is he lord ay of his hors.
But thilke chaffare is wel wors,
There Venus entremeteth nought;
For who-so such chaffare hath bought,
He shal not worchen so wysly,
That he ne shal lese al outerly
Bothe his money and his chaffare;
But the seller of the ware
The prys and profit have shal.
Certeyn, the byer shal lese al;
For he ne can so dere it bye
To have lordship and ful maistrye,
Ne have power to make letting
Neither for yift ne for preching,
That of his chaffare, maugre his,
Another shal have as moche, y-wis,
If he wol yeve as moche as he,
Of what contrey so that he be;
Or for right nought, so happe may,
If he can flater hir to hir pay.
Ben than suche marchaunts wyse?
No, but fooles in every wyse,
Whan they bye such thing wilfully,
Ther-as they lese her good fully.
But natheless, this dar I saye,
My moder is not wont to paye,
For she is neither so fool ne nyce,
To entremete hir of sich vyce.
But truste wel, he shal paye al,
That repente of his bargeyn shal,
Whan Poverte put him in distresse,
Al were he scoler to Richesse,
That is for me in gret yerning,
Whan she assenteth to my willing.
'But, by my moder seint Venus,
And by hir fader Saturnus,
That hir engendrid by his lyf,
But not upon his wedded wyf!
Yit wol I more unto you swere,
To make this thing the sëurere;

Now by that feith, and that leautee
I owe to alle my brethren free,
Of which ther nis wight under heven
That can her fadres names neven,
So dyvers and so many ther be
That with my moder have be privee!
Yit wolde I swere, for sikernesse,
The pole of helle to my witnesse,
Now drinke I not this yeer clarree,
If that I lye, or forsworn be!
(For of the goddes the usage is,
That who-so him forswereth amis,
Shal that yeer drinke no clarree).
Now have I sworn y-nough, pardee;
If I forswere me, than am I lorn,
But I wol never be forsworn.
Sith Richesse hath me failed here,
She shal abye that trespas dere,
At leeste wey, but she hir arme
With swerd, or sparth, or gisarme.
For certes, sith she loveth not me,
Fro thilke tyme that she may see
The castel and the tour to-shake,
In sory time she shal awake.
If I may grype a riche man,
I shal so pulle him, if I can,
That he shal, in a fewe stoundes,
Lese alle his markes and his poundes.
I shal him make his pens outslinge,
But-if they in his gerner springe;
Our maydens shal eek plukke him so,
That him shal neden fetheres mo,
And make him selle his lond to spende,
But he the bet cunne him defende.
'Pore men han maad hir lord of me;
Although they not so mighty be,
That they may fede me in delyt,
I wol not have hem in despyt.
No good man hateth hem, as I gesse;
For chinche and feloun is Richesse,

That so can chase hem and dispyse,
And hem defoule in sondry wyse.
They loven ful bet, so god me spede,
Than doth the riche, chinchy gnede,
And been, in good feith, more stable
And trewer, and more serviable;
And therfore it suffyseth me
Hir goode herte, and hir leautee.
They han on me set al hir thought,
And therfore I forgete hem nought.
I wold hem bringe in greet noblesse,
If that I were god of Richesse,
As I am god of Love, sothly,
Such routhe upon hir pleynt have I.
Therfore I must his socour be,
That peyneth him to serven me;
For if he deyde for love of this,
Than semeth in me no love ther is.'
'Sir,' seide they, 'sooth is, every del,
That ye reherce, and we wot wel
Thilk oth to holde is resonable;
For it is good and covenable,
That ye on riche men han sworn.
For, sir, this wot we wel biforn;
If riche men doon you homage,
That is as fooles doon outrage;
But ye shul not forsworen be,
Ne let therfore to drinke clarree,
Or piment maked fresh and newe.
Ladyes shulle hem such pepir brewe,
If that they falle into hir laas,
That they for wo mowe seyn "Allas!"
Ladyes shuln ever so curteis be,
That they shal quyte your oth al free.
Ne seketh never other vicaire,
For they shal speke with hem so faire
That ye shal holde you payed ful wel,
Though ye you medle never a del.
Lat ladies worche with hir thinges,
They shal hem telle so fele tydinges,

And moeve hem eke so many requestis
By flatery, that not honest is,
And therto yeve hem such thankinges,
What with kissing, and with talkinges,
That certes, if they trowed be,
Shal never leve hem lond ne fee
That it nil as the moeble fare,
Of which they first delivered are.
Now may ye telle us al your wille,
And we your hestes shal fulfille.
'But Fals-Semblant dar not, for drede
Of you, sir, medle him of this dede,
For he seith that ye been his fo;
He not, if ye wol worche him wo.
Wherfore we pray you alle, beau-sire,
That ye forgive him now your ire,
And that he may dwelle, as your man,
With Abstinence, his dere lemman;
This our accord and our wil now.'
'Parfay,' seide Love, 'I graunte it yow;
I wol wel holde him for my man;
Now lat him come:' and he forth ran.
'Fals-Semblant,' quod Love, 'in this wyse
I take thee here to my servyse,
That thou our freendis helpe alway,
And hindre hem neither night ne day,
But do thy might hem to releve,
And eek our enemies that thou greve.
Thyn be this might, I graunt it thee,
My king of harlotes shalt thou be;
We wol that thou have such honour.
Certeyn, thou art a fals traitour,
And eek a theef; sith thou were born,
A thousand tyme thou art forsworn.
But, natheles, in our hering,
To putte our folk out of douting,
I bid thee teche hem, wostow how?
By somme general signe now,
In what place thou shalt founden be,
If that men had mister of thee;

And how men shal thee best espye,
For thee to knowe is greet maistrye;
Tel in what place is thyn haunting.'
F. Sem. 'Sir, I have fele dyvers woning,
That I kepe not rehersed be,
So that ye wolde respyten me.
For if that I telle you the sothe,
I may have harm and shame bothe.
If that my felowes wisten it,
My tales shulden me be quit;
For certeyn, they wolde hate me,
If ever I knewe hir cruelte;
For they wolde over-al holde hem still
Of trouthe that is ageyn hir wille;
Suche tales kepen they not here.
I might eftsone bye it ful dere,
If I seide of hem any thing,
That ought displeseth to hir hering.
For what word that hem prikke or byteth,
In that word noon of hem delyteth,
Al were it gospel, the evangyle,
That wolde reprove hem of hir gyle,
For they are cruel and hauteyn.
And this thing wot I wel, certeyn,
If I speke ought to peire hir loos,
Your court shal not so wel be cloos,
That they ne shal wite it atte last.
Of good men am I nought agast,
For they wol taken on hem no-thing,
Whan that they knowe al my mening;
But he that wol it on him take,
He wol himself suspecious make,
That he his lyf let covertly,
In Gyle and in Ipocrisy,
That me engendred and yaf fostring.'
'They made a ful good engendring,'
Quod Love, 'for who-so soothly telle,
They engendred the devel of helle!
'But nedely, how-so-ever it be,'
Quod Love, 'I wol and charge thee,

To telle anoon thy woning-places,
Hering ech wight that in this place is;
And what lyf that thou livest also,
Hyde it no lenger now; wherto?
Thou must discover al thy wurching,
How thou servest, and of what thing,
Though that thou shuldest for thy soth-sawe
Ben al to-beten and to-drawe;
And yit art thou not wont, pardee.
But natheles, though thou beten be,
Thou shalt not be the first, that so
Hath for soth-sawe suffred wo.'

F. Sem. 'Sir, sith that it may lyken you,
Though that I shulde be slayn right now,
I shal don your comaundement,
For therto have I gret talent.'

Withouten wordes mo, right than,
Fals-Semblant his sermon bigan,
And seide hem thus in audience:—
'Barouns, tak hede of my sentence!
That wight that list to have knowing
Of Fals-Semblant, ful of flatering,
He must in worldly folk him seke,
And, certes, in the cloistres eke;
I wone no-where but in hem tweye;
But not lyk even, sooth to seye;
Shortly, I wol herberwe me
There I hope best to hulstred be;
And certeynly, sikerest hyding
Is underneth humblest clothing.

'Religious folk ben ful covert;
Seculer folk ben more appert.
But natheles, I wol not blame
Religious folk, ne hem diffame,
In what habit that ever they go:
Religioun humble, and trewe also,
Wol I not blame, ne dispyse,
But I nil love it, in no wyse.
I mene of fals religious,
That stoute ben, and malicious;

That wolen in an abit go,
And setten not hir herte therto.
'Religious folk ben al pitous;
Thou shalt not seen oon dispitous.
They loven no pryde, ne no stryf,
But humbly they wol lede hir lyf;
With swich folk wol I never be.
And if I dwelle, I feyne me
I may wel in her abit go;
But me were lever my nekke atwo,
Than lete a purpose that I take,
What covenaunt that ever I make.
I dwelle with hem that proude be,
And fulle of wyles and subtelte;
That worship of this world coveyten,
And grete nedes cunne espleyten;
And goon and gadren greet pitaunces,
And purchace hem the acqueyntaunces
Of men that mighty lyf may leden;
And feyne hem pore, and hem-self feden
With gode morcels delicious,
And drinken good wyn precious,
And preche us povert and distresse,
And fisshen hem-self greet richesse
With wyly nettis that they caste:
It wol come foul out at the laste.
They ben fro clene religioun went:
They make the world an argument
That hath a foul conclusioun.
"I have a robe of religioun,
Than am I al religious:"
This argument is al roignous;
It is not worth a croked brere;
Habit ne maketh monk ne frere,
But clene lyf and devocioun
Maketh gode men of religioun.
Nathelesse, ther can noon answere,
How high that ever his heed he shere
With rasour whetted never so kene,
That Gyle in braunches cut thrittene;

Ther can no wight distincte it so,
That he dar sey a word therto.
'But what herberwe that ever I take,
Or what semblant that ever I make,
I mene but gyle, and folowe that;
For right no mo than Gibbe our cat
Fro myce and rattes went his wyle,
No entende I not but to begyle;
Ne no wight may, by my clothing,
Wite with what folk is my dwelling,
Ne by my wordis yet, pardee,
So softe and so plesaunt they be.
Bihold the dedes that I do;
But thou be blind, thou oughtest so;
For, varie hir wordis fro hir dede,
They thenke on gyle, withouten drede,
What maner clothing that they were,
Or what estat that ever they bere,
Lered or lewd, lord or lady,
Knight, squier, burgeis, or bayly.'
Right thus whyl Fals-Semblant sermoneth,
Eftsones Love him aresoneth,
And brak his tale in the speking
As though he had him told lesing;
And seide: 'What, devel, is that I here?
What folk hast thou us nempned here?
May men finde religioun
In worldly habitacioun?'
F. Sem. 'Ye, sir; it foloweth not that they
Shulde lede a wikked lyf, parfey,
Ne not therfore her soules lese,
That hem to worldly clothes chese;
For, certes, it were gret pitee.
Men may in seculer clothes see
Florisshen holy religioun.
Ful many a seynt in feeld and toun,
With many a virgin glorious,
Devout, and ful religious,
Had deyed, that comun clothe ay beren,
Yit seyntes never-the-les they weren.

I coude reken you many a ten ;
Ye, wel nigh alle these holy wimmen,
That men in chirches herie and seke,
Bothe maydens, and these wyves eke,
That baren many a fair child here,
Wered alwey clothis seculere,
And in the same dyden they,
That seyntes weren, and been alwey.
The eleven thousand maydens dere,
That beren in heven hir cierges clere,
Of which men rede in chirche, and singe,
Were take in seculer clothing,
Whan they resseyved martirdom,
And wonnen heven unto her hoom.
Good herte maketh the gode thought ;
The clothing yeveth ne reveth nought.
The gode thought and the worching,
That maketh religioun flowring,
Ther lyth the good religioun
After the right entencioun.
'Who-so toke a wethers skin,
And wrapped a gredy wolf therin,
For he shulde go with lambes whyte,
Wenest thou not he wolde hem byte?
Yis ! never-the-las, as he were wood,
He wolde hem wery, and drinke the blood ;
And wel the rather hem disceyve,
For, sith they coude not perceyve
His treget and his crueltee,
They wolde him folowe, al wolde he flee.
'If ther be wolves of sich hewe
Amonges these apostlis newe,
Thou, holy chirche, thou mayst be wayled !
Sith that thy citee is assayled
Thourgh knightes of thyn owne table,
God wot thy lordship is doutable !
If they enforce hem it to winne,
That shulde defende it fro withinne,
Who might defence ayens hem make?
Withouten stroke it mot be take

Of trepeget or mangonel;
Without displaying of pensel.
And if god nil don it socour,
But lat hem renne in this colour,
Thou moost thyn heestes laten be.
Than is ther nought, but yelde thee,
Or yeve hem tribute, doutelees,
And holde it of hem to have pees:
But gretter harm bityde thee,
That they al maister of it be.
Wel conne they scorne thee withal;
By day stuffen they the wal,
And al the night they mynen there.
Nay, thou most planten elleswhere
Thyn impes, if thou wolt fruyt have;
Abyd not there thy-self to save.
'But now pees! here I turne ageyn;
I wol no more of this thing seyn,
If I may passen me herby;
I mighte maken you wery.
But I wol heten you alway
To helpe your freendes what I may,
So they wollen my company;
For they be shent al-outerly
But-if so falle, that I be
Oft with hem, and they with me.
And eek my lemman mot they serve,
Or they shul not my love deserve.
Forsothe, I am a fals traitour;
God jugged me for a theef trichour;
Forsworn I am, but wel nygh non
Wot of my gyle, til it be don.
'Thourgh me hath many oon deth resseyved,
That my treget never aperceyved;
And yit resseyveth, and shal resseyve,
That my falsnesse never aperceyve:
But who-so doth, if he wys be,
Him is right good be war of me.
But so sligh is the deceyving
That to hard is the aperceyving.

For Protheus, that coude him chaunge
In every shap, hoomly and straunge,
Coude never sich gyle ne tresoun
As I; for I com never in toun
Ther-as I mighte knowen be,
Though men me bothe might here and see.
Ful wel I can my clothes chaunge,
Take oon, and make another straunge.
Now am I knight, now chasteleyn;
Now prelat, and now chapeleyn;
Now prest, now clerk, and now forstere;
Now am I maister, now scolere;
Now monk, now chanoun, now baily;
What-ever maister man am I.
Now am I prince, now am I page,
And can by herte every langage.
Som-tyme am I hoor and old;
Now am I yong, and stout, and bold;
Now am I Robert, now Robyn;
Now frere Menour, now Iacobyn;
And with me folweth my loteby,
To don me solas and company,
That hight dame Abstinence-Streyned,
In many a queynt array y-feyned.
Right as it cometh to hir lyking,
I fulfille al hir desiring.
Somtyme a wommans cloth take I;
Now am I mayde, now lady.
Somtyme I am religious;
Now lyk an anker in an hous.
Somtyme am I prioresse,
And now a nonne, and now abbesse;
And go thurgh alle regiouns,
Seking alle religiouns.
But to what ordre that I am sworn,
I take the strawe, and lete the corn;
To blynde folk ther I enhabite,
I axe no-more but hir abite.
What wol ye more? in every wyse,
Right as me list, I me disgyse.

Wel can I bere me under weed ;
Unlyk is my word to my deed.
Thus make I in my trappes falle,
Thurgh my pryvileges, alle
That ben in Cristendom alyve.
I may assoile, and I may shryve,
That no prelat may lette me,
Al folk, wher-ever they founde be :
I noot no prelat may don so,
But it the pope be, and no mo,
That made thilk establisshing.
Now is not this a propre thing ?
But, were my sleightes aperceyved,
Ne shulde I more been receyved
As I was wont ; and wostow why ?
For I dide hem a tregetry ;
But therof yeve I litel tale,
I have the silver and the male ;
So have I preched and eek shriven,
So have I take, so have me yiven,
Thurgh hir foly, husbond and wyf,
That I lede right a joly lyf,
Thurgh simplesse of the prelacye ;
They know not al my tregetrye.
'But for as moche as man and wyf
Shuld shewe hir paroche-prest hir lyf
Ones a yeer, as seith the book,
Er any wight his housel took,
Than have I pryvileges large,
That may of moche thing discharge ;
For he may seye right thus, pardee :—
"Sir Preest, in shrift I telle it thee,
That he, to whom that I am shriven,
Hath me assoiled, and me yiven
Penaunce soothly, for my sinne,
Which that I fond me gilty inne ;
Ne I ne have never entencioun
To make double confessioun,
Ne reherce eft my shrift to thee ;
O shrift is right y-nough to me.

This oughte thee suffyce wel,
Ne be not rebel never-a-del;
For certes, though thou haddest it sworn,
I wot no prest ne prelat born
That may to shrift eft me constreyne.
And if they don, I wol me pleyne;
For I wot where to pleyne wel.
Thou shalt not streyne me a del,
Ne enforce me, ne yit me trouble,
To make my confessioun double.
Ne I have none affeccioun
To have double absolucioun.
The firste is right y-nough to me,
This latter assoiling quyte I thee.
I am unbounde; what mayst thou finde
More of my sinnes me to unbinde?
For he, that might hath in his hond,
Of alle my sinnes me unbond.
And if thou wolt me thus constreyne,
That me mot nedis on thee pleyne,
There shal no jugge imperial,
Ne bisshop, ne official,
Don jugement on me; for I
Shal gon and pleyne me openly
Unto my shrift-fader newe,
(That hight not Frere Wolf untrewe!)
And he shal chevise him for me,
For I trowe he can hampre thee.
But, lord! he wolde be wrooth withalle,
If men him wolde Frere Wolf calle!
For he wolde have no pacience,
But don al cruel vengeaunce!
He wolde his might don at the leest,
Ne no-thing spare for goddes heest.
And, god so wis be my socour,
But thou yeve me my Saviour
At Ester, whan it lyketh me,
Withoute presing more on thee,
I wol forth, and to him goon,
And he shal housel me anoon,

For I am out of thy grucching ;
I kepe not dele with thee no-thing."
Thus may he shryve him, that forsaketh
His paroche-prest, and to me taketh.
And if the prest wol him refuse,
I am ful redy him to accuse,
And him punisshe and hampre so,
That he his chirche shal forgo.
'But who-so hath in his feling
The consequence of such shryving,
Shal seen that prest may never have might
To knowe the conscience aright
Of him that is under his cure.
And this ageyns holy scripture,
That biddeth every herde honeste
Have verry knowing of his beste.
But pore folk that goon by strete,
That have no gold, ne sommes grete,
Hem wolde I lete to hir prelates,
Or lete hir prestes knowe hir states,
For to me right nought yeve they.'
Amour. 'And why is it?'
F. Sem. 'For they ne may.
They ben so bare, I take no keep ;
But I wol have the fatte sheep ;—
Lat parish prestes have the lene,
I yeve not of hir harm a bene !
And if that prelats grucchen it,
That oughten wroth be in hir wit,
To lese her fatte bestes so,
I shal yeve hem a stroke or two,
That they shal lesen with the force,
Ye, bothe hir mytre and hir croce.
Thus jape I hem, and have do longe,
My priveleges been so stronge.'
Fals-Semblant wolde have stinted here,
But Love ne made him no such chere
That he was wery of his sawe ;
But for to make him glad and fawe,
He seide :—'Tel on more specialy,

How that thou servest untrewly.
Tel forth, and shame thee never a del;
For as thyn abit shewith wel,
Thou semest an holy heremyte.'
F. Sem. 'Soth is, but I am an ypocryte.'
Amour. 'Thou gost and prechest povertee?'
F. Sem. 'Ye, sir; but richesse hath poustee.'
Amour. 'Thou prechest abstinence also?'
F. Sem. 'Sir, I wol fillen, so mote I go,
My paunche of gode mete and wyne,
As shulde a maister of divyne;
For how that I me pover feyne,
Yit alle pore folk I disdeyne.
'I love bet the acqueyntaunce
Ten tymes, of the king of Fraunce,
Than of pore man of mylde mode,
Though that his soule be also gode.
For whan I see beggers quaking,
Naked on mixens al stinking,
For hungre crye, and eek for care,
I entremete not of hir fare.
They been so pore, and ful of pyne,
They might not ones yeve me dyne,
For they have no-thing but hir lyf;
What shulde he yeve that likketh his knyf?
It is but foly to entremete,
To seke in houndes nest fat mete.
Let bere hem to the spitel anoon,
But, for me, comfort gete they noon.
But a riche sike usurere
Wolde I visyte and drawe nere;
Him wol I comforte and rehete,
For I hope of his gold to gete.
And if that wikked deth him have,
I wol go with him to his grave.
And if ther any reprove me,
Why that I lete the pore be,
Wostow how I mot ascape?
I sey, and swerë him ful rape,
That riche men han more tecches

Of sinne, than han pore wrecches,
And han of counseil more mister;
And therfore I wol drawe hem ner.
But as gret hurt, it may so be,
Hath soul in right gret poverte,
As soul in gret richesse, forsothe,
Al-be-it that they hurten bothe.
For richesse and mendicitees
Ben cleped two extremitees;
The mene is cleped suffisaunce,
Ther lyth of vertu the aboundaunce.
For Salamon, ful wel I woot,
In his Parables us wroot,
As it is knowe of many a wight,
In his thrittethe chapitre right:
"God, thou me kepe, for thy poustee,
Fro richesse and mendicitee;
For if a riche man him dresse
To thenke to moche on his richesse,
His herte on that so fer is set,
That he his creatour foryet;
And him, that begging wol ay greve,
How shulde I by his word him leve?
Unnethe that he nis a micher,
Forsworn, or elles god is lyer."
Thus seith Salamones sawes;
Ne we finde writen in no lawes,
And namely in our Cristen lay—
(Who seith "ye," I dar sey "nay")—
That Crist, ne his apostles dere,
Whyl that they walkede in erthe here,
Were never seen her bred begging,
For they nolde beggen for no-thing.
And right thus were men wont to teche;
And in this wyse wolde it preche
The maistres of divinitee
Somtyme in Paris the citee.
'And if men wolde ther-geyn appose
The naked text, and lete the glose,
It mighte sone assoiled be;

For men may wel the sothe see,
That, parde, they mighte axe a thing
Pleynly forth, without begging.
For they weren goddes herdes dere,
And cure of soules hadden here,
They nolde no-thing begge hir fode;
For after Crist was don on rode,
With hir propre hondes they wrought,
And with travel, and elles nought,
They wonnen all hir sustenaunce,
And liveden forth in hir penaunce,
And the remenaunt yeve awey
To other pore folk alwey.
They neither bilden tour ne halle,
But leye in houses smale withalle
A mighty man, that can and may,
Shulde with his honde and body alway
Winne him his food in laboring,
If he ne have rent or sich a thing,
Although he be religious,
And god to serven curious.
Thus mote he don, or do trespas,
But-if it be in certeyn cas,
That I can reherce, if mister be,
Right wel, whan the tyme I see.
'Seke the book of Seynt Austin,
Be it in paper or perchemin,
There-as he writ of these worchinges
Thou shalt seen that non excusinges
A parfit man ne shulde seke
By wordes, ne by dedes eke,
Although he be religious,
And god to serven curious,
That he ne shal, so mote I go,
With propre hondes and body also,
Gete his food in laboring,
If he ne have propretee of thing.
Yit shulde he selle al his substaunce,
And with his swink have sustenaunce,
If he be parfit in bountee.

Thus han tho bookes tolde me :
For he that wol gon ydilly,
And useth it ay besily
To haunten other mennes table,
He is a trechour, ful of fable ;
Ne he ne may, by gode resoun,
Excuse him by his orisoun.
For men bihoveth, in som gyse,
Som-tyme leven goddes servyse
To gon and purchasen her nede.
Men mote eten, that is no drede,
And slepe, and eek do other thing ;
So longe may they leve praying.
So may they eek hir prayer blinne,
While that they werke, hir mete to winne.
Seynt Austin wol therto accorde,
In thilke book that I recorde.
Justinian eek, that made lawes,
Hath thus forboden, by olde dawes,
"No man, up peyne to be deed,
Mighty of body, to begge his breed,
If he may swinke, it for to gete ;
Men shulde him rather mayme or bete,
Or doon of him apert justice,
Than suffren him in such malice."
They don not wel, so mote I go,
That taken such almesse so,
But if they have som privelege,
That of the peyne hem wol allege.
But how that is, can I not see,
But-if the prince disseyved be ;
Ne I ne wene not, sikerly,
That they may have it rightfully.
But I wol not determyne
Of princes power, ne defyne,
Ne by my word comprende, y-wis,
If it so fer may strecche in this.
I wol not entremete a del ;
But I trowe that the book seith wel,
Who that taketh almesses, that be

Dewe to folk that men may see
Lame, feble, wery, and bare,
Pore, or in such maner care,
(That conne winne hem nevermo,
For they have no power therto),
He eteth his owne dampning,
But-if he lye, that made al thing.
And if ye such a truaunt finde,
Chastise him wel, if ye be kinde.
But they wolde hate you, percas,
And, if ye fillen in hir laas,
They wolde eftsones do you scathe,
If that they mighte, late or rathe;
For they be not ful pacient,
That han the world thus foule blent.
And witeth wel, wher that god bad
The good man selle al that he had,
And folowe him, and to pore it yive,
He wolde not therfore that he live
To serven him in mendience,
For it was never his sentence;
But he bad wirken whan that nede is,
And folwe him in goode dedes.
Seynt Poule, that loved al holy chirche,
He bade th'apostles for to wirche,
And winnen hir lyflode in that wyse,
And hem defended truaundyse,
And seide, "Wirketh with your honden;"
Thus shulde the thing be understonden.
He nolde, y-wis, bidde hem begging,
Ne sellen gospel, ne preching,
Lest they berafte, with hir asking,
Folk of hir catel or of hir thing.
For in this world is many a man
That yeveth his good, for he ne can
Werne it for shame, or elles he
Wolde of the asker delivered be;
And, for he him encombreth so,
He yeveth him good to late him go:
But it can him no-thing profyte,

They lese the yift and the meryte.
The goode folk, that Poule to preched,
Profred him ofte, whan he hem teched,
Som of hir good in charite;
But therof right no-thing took he;
But of his hondwerk wolde he gete
Clothes to wryen him, and his mete.'
Amour. 'Tel me than how a man may liven,
That al his good to pore hath yiven,
And wol but only bidde his bedes,
And never with hond laboure his nedes:
May he do so?'
F. Sem. 'Ye, sir.'
Amour. 'And how?'
F. Sem. 'Sir, I wol gladly telle yow:—
Seynt Austin seith, a man may be
In houses that han propretee,
As templers and hospitelers,
And as these chanouns regulers,
Or whyte monkes, or these blake—
(I wole no mo ensamples make)—
And take therof his sustening,
For therinne lyth no begging;
But other-weyes not, y-wis,
Yif Austin gabbeth not of this.
And yit ful many a monk laboureth,
That god in holy chirche honoureth;
For whan hir swinking is agoon,
They rede and singe in chirche anoon.
'And for ther hath ben greet discord,
As many a wight may bere record,
Upon the estate of mendience,
I wol shortly, in your presence,
Telle how a man may begge at nede,
That hath not wherwith him to fede,
Maugre his felones jangelinges,
For sothfastnesse wol non hidinges;
And yit, percas, I may abeye
That I to yow sothly thus seye.
'Lo, here the caas especial:

If a man be so bestial
That he of no craft hath science,
And nought desyreth ignorence,
Than may he go a-begging yerne,
Til he som maner craft can lerne,
Thurgh which, withoute truaunding,
He may in trouthe have his living.
Or if he may don no labour,
For elde, or syknesse, or langour,
Or for his tendre age also,
Than may he yit a-begging go.
'Or if he have, peraventure,
Thurgh usage of his noriture,
Lived over deliciously,
Than oughten good folk comunly
Han of his mischeef som pitee,
And suffren him also, that he
May gon aboute and begge his breed,
That he be not for hungur deed.
Or if he have of craft cunning,
And strengthe also, and desiring
To wirken, as he hadde what,
But he finde neither this ne that,
Than may he begge, til that he
Have geten his necessitee.
'Or if his winning be so lyte,
That his labour wol not acquyte
Sufficiantly al his living,
Yit may he go his breed begging;
Fro dore to dore he may go trace,
Til he the remenaunt may purchace.
Or if a man wolde undertake
Any empryse for to make,
In the rescous of our lay,
And it defenden as he may,
Be it with armes or lettrure,
Or other covenable cure,
If it be so he pore be,
Than may he begge, til that he
May finde in trouthe for to swinke,

And gete him clothes, mete, and drinke.
Swinke he with houdes corporel,
And not with houdes espirituel.
'In al thise caas, and in semblables,
If that ther ben mo resonables,
He may begge, as I telle you here,
And elles nought, in no manere;
As William Seynt Amour wolde preche,
And ofte wolde dispute and teche
Of this matere alle openly
At Paris ful solempnely.
And al-so god my soule blesse,
As he had, in this stedfastnesse,
The accord of the universitee,
And of the puple, as semeth me.
'No good man oughte it to refuse,
Ne oughte him therof to excuse,
Be wrooth or blythe who-so be;
For I wol speke, and telle it thee,
Al shulde I dye, and be put doun,
As was seynt Poul, in derk prisoun;
Or be exiled in this caas
With wrong, as maister William was,
That my moder Ypocrisye
Banisshed for hir greet envye.
'My moder flemed him, Seynt Amour:
This noble dide such labour
To susteyne ever the loyaltee,
That he to moche agilte me.
He made a book, and leet it wryte,
Wherin his lyf he dide al wryte,
And wolde ich reneyed begging,
And lived by my traveyling,
If I ne had rent ne other good.
What? wened he that I were wood?
For labour might me never plese,
I have more wil to been at ese;
And have wel lever, sooth to sey,
Bifore the puple patre and prey,
And wrye me in my foxerye

Under a cope of papelardye.'
Quod Love, 'What devel is this I here?
What wordes tellest thou me here?'
F. Sem. 'What, sir?'
Amour. 'Falsnesse, that apert is;
Than dredest thou not god?'
F. Sem. No, certes:
For selde in greet thing shal he spede
In this world, that god wol drede.
For folk that hem to vertu yiven,
And truly on her owne liven,
And hem in goodnesse ay contene,
On hem is litel thrift y-sene;
Such folk drinken gret misese;
That lyf ne may me never plese.
But see what gold han usurers,
And silver eek in hir garners,
Taylagiers, and these monyours,
Bailifs, bedels, provost, countours;
These liven wel nygh by ravyne;
The smale puple hem mote enclyne,
And they as wolves wol hem eten.
Upon the pore folk they geten
Ful moche of that they spende or kepe;
Nis none of hem that he nil strepe,
And wryen him-self wel atte fulle;
Withoute scalding they hem pulle.
The stronge the feble overgoth;
But I, that were my simple cloth,
Robbe bothe robbed and robbours,
And gyle gyled and gylours.
By my treget, I gadre and threste
The greet tresour into my cheste,
That lyth with me so faste bounde.
Myn highe paleys do I founde,
And my delytes I fulfille
With wyne at feestes at my wille,
And tables fulle of entremees;
I wol no lyf, but ese and pees,
And winne gold to spende also.

For whan the grete bagge is go,
It cometh right eft with my japes.
Make I not wel tumble myn apes?
To winne is alwey myn entent;
My purchas is better than my rent;
For though I shulde beten be,
Over-al I entremete me;
Withoute me may no wight dure.
I walke soules for to cure.
Of al the worlde cure have I
In brede and lengthe; boldely
I wol bothe preche and eek counceilen;
With hondes wille I not traveilen,
For of the pope I have the bulle;
I ne holde not my wittes dulle.
I wol not stinten, in my lyve,
These emperoures for to shryve,
Or kynges, dukes, and lordes grete;
But pore folk al quyte I lete.
I love no such shryving, pardee,
But it for other cause be.
I rekke not of pore men,
Hir astate is not worth an hen.
Where fyndest thou a swinker of labour
Have me unto his confessour?
But emperesses, and duchesses,
Thise quenes, and eek thise countesses,
Thise abbesses, and eek Bigyns,
These grete ladyes palasyns,
These joly knightes, and baillyves,
Thise nonnes, and thise burgeis wyves,
That riche been, and eek plesing,
And thise maidens welfaring,
Wher-so they clad or naked be,
Uncounceiled goth ther noon fro me.
And, for her souls savetee,
At lord and lady, and hir meynee,
I axe, whan they hem to me shryve,
The propretee of al hir lyve,
And make hem trowe, bothe meest and leest,

Hir paroch-prest nis but a beest
Ayens me and my company,
That shrewes been as greet as I;
For whiche I wol not hyde in hold
No privetee that me is told,
That I by word or signe, y-wis,
Nil make hem knowe what it is,
And they wolen also tellen me;
They hele fro me no privitee.
And for to make yow hem perceyven,
That usen folk thus to disceyven,
I wol you seyn, withouten drede,
What men may in the gospel rede
Of Seynt Mathew, the gospelere,
That seith, as I shal you sey here.
'Upon the chaire of Moyses—
Thus is it glosed, douteles:
That it is the olde testament,
For therby is the chaire ment—
Sitte Scribes and Pharisien;—
That is to seyn, the cursed men
Whiche that we ypocrites calle—
Doth that they preche, I rede you alle,
But doth not as they don a del,
That been not wery to seye wel,
But to do wel, no wille have they;
And they wolde binde on folk alwey,
That ben to be begyled able,
Burdens that ben importable;
On folkes shuldres thinges they couchen
That they nil with her fingres touchen.'
Amour. 'And why wol they not touche it?'
F. Sem. 'Why?
For hem ne list not, sikerly;
For sadde burdens that men taken
Make folkes shuldres aken.
And if they do ought that good be,
That is for folk it shulde see:
Her borders larger maken they,
And make hir hemmes wyde alwey,

And loven setes at the table,
The firste and most honourable;
And for to han the first chaieres
In synagoges, to hem ful dere is;
And willen that folk hem loute and grete,
Whan that they passen thurgh the strete,
And wolen be cleped 'Maister' also.
But they ne shulde not willen so;
The gospel is ther-ageyns, I gesse:
That sheweth wel hir wikkidnesse.
'Another custom use we:—
Of hem that wol ayens us be,
We hate hem deedly everichoon,
And we wol werry hem, as oon.
Him that oon hateth, hate we alle,
And conjecte how to doon him falle.
And if we seen him winne honour,
Richesse or preys, thurgh his valour,
Provende, rent, or dignitee,
Ful fast, y-wis, compassen we
By what ladder he is clomben so;
And for to maken him doun to go,
With traisoun we wole him defame,
And doon him lese his gode name.
Thus from his ladder we him take,
And thus his freendes foes we make;
But word ne wite shal he noon,
Til alle his freendes been his foon.
For if we dide it openly,
We might have blame redily;
For hadde he wist of our malyce,
He hadde him kept, but he were nyce.
'Another is this, that, if so falle
That ther be oon among us alle
That doth a good turn, out of drede,
We seyn it is our alder dede.
Ye, sikerly, though he it feyned,
Or that him list, or that him deyned
A man thurgh him avaunced be;
Therof alle parceners be we,

And tellen folk, wher-so we go,
That man thurgh us is sprongen so.
And for to have of men preysing,
We purchace, thurgh our flatering,
Of riche men, of gret poustee,
Lettres, to witnesse our bountee ;
So that man weneth, that may us see,
That alle vertu in us be.
And alwey pore we us feyne ;
But how so that we begge or pleyne,
We ben the folk, without lesing,
That al thing have without having.
Thus be we dred of the puple, y-wis.
And gladly my purpos is this :—
I dele with no wight, but he
Have gold and tresour gret plentee ;
Hir acqueyntaunce wel love I ;
This is moche my desyr, shortly.
I entremete me of brocages,
I make pees and mariages,
I am gladly executour,
And many tymes procuratour ;
I am somtyme messager ;
That falleth not to my mister.
And many tymes I make enquestes ;
For me that office not honest is ;
To dele with other mennes thing,
That is to me a gret lyking.
And if that ye have ought to do
In place that I repeire to,
I shal it spenden thurgh my wit,
As sone as ye have told me it.
So that ye serve me to pay,
My servise shal be your alway.
But who-so wol chastyse me,
Anoon my love lost hath he ;
For I love no man in no gyse,
That wol me repreve or chastyse ;
But I wolde al folk undertake,
And of no wight no teching take ;

For I, that other folk chastye,
Wol not be taught fro my folye.
'I love noon hermitage more;
Alle desertes, and holtes hore,
And grete wodes everichoon,
I lete hem to the Baptist Iohan.
I quethe him quyte, and him relesse
Of Egipt al the wildirnesse;
To fer were alle my mansiouns
Fro alle citees and goode tounes.
My paleis and myn hous make I
There men may renne in openly,
And sey that I the world forsake.
But al amidde I bilde and make
My hous, and swimme and pley therinne
Bet than a fish doth with his finne.
'Of Antecristes men am I,
Of whiche that Crist seith openly,
They have abit of holinesse,
And liven in such wikkednesse.
Outward, lambren semen we,
Fulle of goodnesse and of pitee,
And inward we, withouten fable,
Ben gredy wolves ravisable.
We environne bothe londe and see;
With al the world werreyen we;
We wol ordeyne of alle thing,
Of folkes good, and her living.
'If ther be castel or citee
Wherin that any bougerons be,
Although that they of Milayne were,
For ther-of ben they blamed there:
Or if a wight, out of mesure,
Wolde lene his gold, and take usure,
For that he is so coveitous:
Or if he be to leccherous,
Or thefe, or haunte simonye;
Or provost, ful of trecherye,
Or prelat, living jolily,
Or prest that halt his quene him by;

Or olde hores hostilers,
Or other bawdes or bordillers,
Or elles blamed of any vyce,
Of whiche men shulden doon justyce:
By alle the seyntes that we pray,
But they defende hem with lamprey,
With luce, with eles, with samouns,
With tendre gees, and with capouns,
With tartes, or with cheses fat,
With deynte flawnes, brode and flat,
With caleweys, or with pullaille,
With coninges, or with fyn vitaille,
That we, under our clothes wyde,
Maken thurgh our golet glyde:
Or but he wol do come in haste
Roo-venisoun, y-bake in paste:
Whether so that he loure or groine,
He shal have of a corde a loigne.
With whiche men shal him binde and lede,
To brenne him for his sinful dede,
That men shulle here him crye and rore
A myle-wey aboute, and more.
Or elles he shal in prisoun dye,
But-if he wol our frendship bye,
Or smerten that that he hath do,
More than his gilt amounteth to.
But, and he couthe thurgh his sleight
Do maken up a tour of height,
Nought roughte I whether of stone or tree,
Or erthe, or turves though it be,
Though it were of no vounde stone
Wrought with squyre and scantilone,
So that the tour were stuffed wel
With alle richesse temporel;
And thanne, that he wolde updresse
Engyns, bothe more and lesse,
To caste at us, by every syde—
To bere his goode name wyde—
Such sleightes as I shal yow nevene,
Barelles of wyne, by sixe or sevene,

Or gold in sakkes gret plente,
He shulde sone delivered be.
And if he have noon sich pitaunces,
Late him study in equipolences,
And lete lyes and fallaces,
If that he wolde deserve our graces:
Or we shal bere him such witnesse
Of sinne, and of his wrecchidnesse,
And doon his loos so wyde renne,
That al quik we shulde him brenne,
Or elles yeve him suche penaunce,
That is wel wors than the pitaunce.
'For thou shalt never, for no-thing,
Con knowen aright by her clothing
The traitours fulle of trecherye,
But thou her werkes can aspye.
And ne hadde the good keping be
Whylom of the universitee,
That kepeth the key of Cristendome,
They had been turmented, alle and some.
Suche been the stinking fals prophetis;
Nis non of hem, that good prophete is;
For they, thurgh wikked entencioun,
The yeer of the incarnacioun
A thousand and two hundred yeer,
Fyve and fifty, ferther ne ner,
Broughten a book, with sory grace,
To yeven ensample in comune place,
That seide thus, though it were fable:—
"This is the Gospel Perdurable,
That fro the Holy Goost is sent."
Wel were it worth to ben y-brent!
Entitled was in such manere
This book, of which I telle here.
Ther nas no wight in al Parys,
Biforn Our Lady, at parvys,
That he ne mighte bye the book,
To copy, if him talent took.
Ther might he see, by greet tresoun,
Ful many fals comparisoun:—

"As moche as, thurgh his grete might,
Be it of hete, or of light,
The sunne surmounteth the mone,
That troubler is, and chaungeth sone,
And the note-kernel the shelle—
(I scorne nat that I yow telle)—
Right so, withouten any gyle,
Surmounteth this noble Evangyle
The word of any evangelist."
And to her title they token Christ;
And many such comparisoun,
Of which I make no mencioun,
Might men in that boke finde,
Who-so coude of hem have minde.
'Th' universitee, that tho was aslepe,
Gan for to braide, and taken kepe;
And at the noys the heed up-caste,
Ne never sithen slepte it faste,
But up it sterte, and armes took
Ayens this fals horrible book,
Al redy batail for to make,
And to the juge the book to take.
But they that broughten the book there
Hente it anoon awey, for fere;
They nolde shewe it more a del,
But thenne it kepte, and kepen wil,
Til such a tyme that they may see
That they so stronge woxen be,
That no wight may hem wel withstonde;
For by that book they durst not stonde.
Away they gonne it for to bere,
For they ne durste not answere
By exposicioun ne glose
To that that clerkes wole appose
Ayens the cursednesse, y-wis,
That in that boke writen is.
Now wot I not, ne I can not see
What maner ende that there shal be
Of al this boke that they hyde;
But yit algate they shal abyde

Til that they may it bet defende ;
This trowe I best, wol be hir ende.
'Thus Antecrist abyden we,
For we ben alle of his meynee ;
And what man that wol not be so,
Right sone he shal his lyf forgo.
We wol a puple on him areyse,
And thurgh our gyle doon him seise,
And him on sharpe speres ryve,
Or other-weyes bringe him fro lyve,
But-if that he wol folowe, y-wis,
That in our boke writen is.
Thus moche wol our book signifye,
That whyl that Peter hath maistrye,
May never Johan shewe wel his might.
'Now have I you declared right
The mening of the bark and rinde
That maketh the entencions blinde.
But now at erst I wol biginne
To expowne you the pith withinne :—
And first, by Peter, as I wene,
The Pope himself we wolden mene,
And eek the seculers comprehende,
That Cristes lawe wol defende,
And shulde it kepen and mayntenen
Ayeines hem that al sustenen,
And falsly to the puple techen.
And Johan bitokeneth hem that prechen,
That ther nis lawe covenable
But thilke Gospel Perdurable,
That fro the Holy Gost was sent
To turne folk that been miswent.
The strengthe of Johan they undirstonde
The grace in which, they seye, they stonde,
That doth the sinful folk converte,
And hem to Jesus Crist reverte.
'Ful many another horriblete
May men in that boke see,
That ben comaunded, douteles,
Ayens the lawe of Rome expres ;

And alle with Antecrist they holden,
As men may in the book biholden.
And than comaunden they to sleen
Alle tho that with Peter been;
But they shal nevere have that might,
And, god toforn, for stryf to fight,
That they ne shal y-nough men finde
That Peters lawe shal have in minde,
And ever holde, and so mayntene,
That at the last it shal be sene,
That they shal alle come therto,
For ought that they can speke or do.
And thilke lawe shal not stonde,
That they by Johan have undirstonde;
But, maugre hem, it shal adoun,
And been brought to confusioun.
But I wol stinte of this matere,
For it is wonder long to here;
But hadde that ilke book endured,
Of better estate I were ensured;
And freendes have I yit, pardee,
That han me set in greet degree.
'Of al this world is emperour
Gyle my fader, the trechour,
And emperesse my moder is,
Maugre the Holy Gost, y-wis.
Our mighty linage and our route
Regneth in every regne aboute;
And wel is worth we maistres be,
For al this world governe we,
And can the folk so wel disceyve,
That noon our gyle can perceyve;
And though they doon, they dar not saye;
The sothe dar no wight biwreye.
But he in Cristis wrath him ledeth,
That more than Crist my bretheren dredeth.
He nis no ful good champioun,
That dredeth such similacioun;
Nor that for peyne wole refusen
Us to correcten and accusen.

He wol not entremete by right,
Ne have god in his eye-sight,
And therfore god shal him punyce;
But me ne rekketh of no vyce,
Sithen men us loven comunably,
And holden us for so worthy,
That we may folk repreve echoon,
And we nil have repref of noon.
Whom shulden folk worshipen so
But us, that stinten never mo
To patren whyl that folk us see,
Though it not so bihinde hem be?
'And where is more wood folye,
Than to enhaunce chivalrye,
And love noble men and gay,
That joly clothes weren alway?
If they be sich folk as they semen,
So clene, as men her clothes demen,
And that her wordes folowe her dede,
It is gret pite, out of drede,
For they wol be noon ypocrites!
Of hem, me thinketh it gret spite is;
I can not love hem on no syde.
But Beggers with these hodes wyde,
With sleighe and pale faces lene,
And greye clothes not ful clene,
But fretted ful of tatarwagges,
And highe shoes, knopped with dagges,
That frouncen lyke a quaile-pype,
Or botes riveling as a gype;
To such folk as I you devyse
Shulde princes and these lordes wyse
Take alle her londes and her thinges,
Bothe werre and pees, in governinges;
To such folk shulde a prince him yive,
That wolde his lyf in honour live.
And if they be not as they seme,
That serven thus the world to queme,
There wolde I dwelle, to disceyve
The folk, for they shal not perceyve.

'But I ne speke in no such wyse,
That men shulde humble abit dispyse,
So that no pryde ther-under be.
No man shulde hate, as thinketh me,
The pore man in sich clothing.
But god ne preiseth him no-thing,
That seith he hath the world forsake,
And hath to worldly glorie him take,
And wol of siche delyces use;
Who may that Begger wel excuse?
That papelard, that him yeldeth so,
And wol to worldly ese go,
And seith that he the world hath left,
And gredily it grypeth eft,
He is the hound, shame is to seyn,
That to his casting goth ageyn.
'But unto you dar I not lye:
But mighte I felen or aspye
That ye perceyved it no-thing,
Ye shulden have a stark lesing
Right in your hond thus, to biginne,
I nolde it lette for no sinne.'
The god lough at the wonder tho,
And every wight gan laughe also,
And seide:—'Lo here a man aright
For to be trusty to every wight!'
'Fals Semblant,' quod Love, 'sey to me,
Sith I thus have avaunced thee,
That in my court is thy dwelling,
And of ribaudes shalt be my king,
Wolt thou wel holden my forwardes?'
F. Sem. 'Ye, sir, from hennes forewardes;
Hadde never your fader here-biforn
Servaunt so trewe, sith he was born.'
Amour. 'That is ayeines al nature.'
F. Sem. 'Sir, put you in that aventure;
For though ye borowes take of me,
The sikerer shal ye never be
For ostages, ne sikirnesse,
Or chartres, for to bere witnesse.

I take your-self to record here,
That men ne may, in no manere,
Teren the wolf out of his hyde,
Til he be flayn, bak and syde,
Though men him bete and al defyle;
What? wene ye that I wole bigyle?
For I am clothed mekely,
Ther-under is al my trechery;
Myn herte chaungeth never the mo
For noon abit, in which I go.
Though I have chere of simplenesse,
I am not wery of shrewednesse.
My lemman, Streyned-Abstinence,
Hath mister of my purveaunce;
She hadde ful longe ago be deed,
Nere my councel and my reed;
Lete hir allone, and you and me.'
And Love answerde, 'I truste thee
Withoute borowe, for I wol noon.'
And Fals-Semblant, the theef, anoon,
Right in that ilke same place,
That hadde of tresoun al his face
Right blak withinne, and whyt withoute,
Thanketh him, gan on his knees loute.
Than was ther nought, but 'Every man
Now to assaut, that sailen can,'
Quod Love, 'and that ful hardily.'
Than armed they hem communly
Of sich armour as to hem fel.
Whan they were armed, fers and fel,
They wente hem forth, alle in a route,
And sette the castel al aboute;
They wil nought away, for no drede,
Til it so be that they ben dede,
Or til they have the castel take.
And foure batels they gan make,
And parted hem in foure anoon,
And toke her way, and forth they goon,
The foure gates for to assaile,
Of whiche the kepers wol not faile;

For they ben neither syke ne dede,
But hardy folk, and stronge in dede.
Now wole I seyn the countenaunce
Of Fals-Semblant, and Abstinaunce,
That ben to Wikkid-Tonge went.
But first they helde her parlement,
Whether it to done were
To maken hem be knowen there,
Or elles walken forth disgysed.
But at the laste they devysed,
That they wold goon in tapinage,
As it were in a pilgrimage,
Lyk good and holy folk unfeyned.
And Dame Abstinence-Streyned
Took on a robe of camelyne,
And gan hir graithe as a Begyne.
A large coverchief of threde
She wrapped al aboute hir hede,
But she forgat not hir sautere;
A peire of bedes eek she bere
Upon a lace, al of whyt threde,
On which that she hir bedes bede;
But she ne boughte hem never a del,
For they were geven her, I wot wel,
God wot, of a ful holy frere,
That seide he was hir fader dere,
To whom she hadde ofter wente
Than any frere of his covent.
And he visyted hir also,
And many a sermoun seide hir to;
He nolde lette, for man on lyve,
That he ne wolde hir ofte shryve.
And with so gret devocion
They maden her confession,
That they had ofte, for the nones,
Two hedes in one hood at ones.
Of fair shape I devyse her thee,
But pale of face somtyme was she;
That false traitouresse untrewe
Was lyk that salowe hors of hewe,

That in the Apocalips is shewed,
That signifyeth tho folk beshrewed,
That been al ful of trecherye,
And pale, thurgh hypocrisye;
For on that hors no colour is,
But only deed and pale, y-wis.
Of suche a colour enlangoured
Was Abstinence, y-wis, coloured;
Of her estat she her repented,
As her visage represented.
She had a burdoun al of Thefte,
That Gyle had yeve her of his yefte;
And a scrippe of Fainte Distresse,
That ful was of elengenesse,
And forth she walked sobrely:
And False-Semblant saynt, *ie vous dy*,
Had, as it were for such mistere,
Don on the cope of a frere,
With chere simple, and ful pitous;
His looking was not disdeinous,
Ne proud, but meke and ful pesible.
About his nekke he bar a bible,
And squierly forth gan he gon;
And, for to reste his limmes upon,
He had of Treson a potente;
As he were feble, his way he wente.
But in his sleve he gan to thringe
A rasour sharp, and wel bytinge,
That was forged in a forge,
Which that men clepen Coupe-gorge.
So longe forth hir way they nomen,
Til they to Wicked-Tonge comen,
That at his gate was sitting,
And saw folk in the way passing.
The pilgrimes saw he faste by,
That beren hem ful mekely,
And humblely they with him mette.
Dame Abstinence first him grette,
And sith him False-Semblant salued,
And he hem; but he not remued,

For he ne dredde hem not a-del.
For when he saw hir faces wel,
Alway in herte him thoughte so,
He shulde knowe hem bothe two ;
For wel he knew Dame Abstinaunce,
But he ne knew not Constreynaunce.
He knew nat that she was constrayned,
Ne of her theves lyfe feyned,
But wende she com of wil al free ;
But she com in another degree ;
And if of good wil she began,
That wil was failed her as than.
And Fals-Semblant had he seyn als,
But he knew nat that he was fals.
Yet fals was he, but his falsnesse
Ne coude he not espye, nor gesse ;
For Semblant was so slye wrought,
That falsnesse he ne espyed nought.
But haddest thou knowen him beforn,
Thou woldest on a boke have sworn,
Whan thou him saugh in thilke aray
That he, that whylom was so gay,
And of the daunce Joly Robin,
Was tho become a Jacobin.
But sothely, what so men him calle,
Freres Prechours been good men alle ;
Hir order wickedly they beren,
Suche minstrelles if that they weren.
So been Augustins and Cordileres,
And Carmes, and eek Sakked Freres,
And alle freres, shodde and bare,
(Though some of hem ben grete and square)
Ful holy men, as I hem deme ;
Everich of hem wolde good man seme
But shalt thou never of apparence
Seen conclude good consequence
In none argument, y-wis,
If existence al failed is.
For men may finde alway sophyme
The consequence to envenyme,

Who-so that hath the subteltee
The double sentence for to see.
  Whan the pilgrymes commen were
To Wicked-Tonge, that dwelled there,
Hir harneis nigh hem was algate ;
By Wicked-Tonge adoun they sate,
That bad hem ner him for to come,
And of tydinges telle him some,
And sayde hem :—'What cas maketh yow
To come into this place now?'
'Sir,' seyde Strained-Abstinaunce,
'We, for to drye our penaunce,
With hertes pitous and devoute,
Are commen, as pilgrimes gon aboute ;
Wel nigh on fote alway we go ;
Ful dusty been our heles two ;
And thus bothe we ben sent
Thurghout this world that is miswent,
To yeve ensample, and preche also.
To fisshen sinful men we go,
For other fisshing ne fisshe we.
And, sir, for that charitee,
As we be wont, herberwe we crave,
Your lyf to amende ; Crist it save !
And, so it shulde you nat displese,
We wolden, if it were your ese,
A short sermoun unto you seyn.'
And Wikked-Tonge answerde ageyn,
'The hous,' quod he, 'such as ye see,
Shal nat be warned you for me,
Sey what you list, and I wol here.'
'Graunt mercy, swete sire dere !'
Quod alderfirst Dame Abstinence,
And thus began she hir sentence :
  Const. Abstinence. 'Sir, the first vertue, certeyn,
The gretest, and most sovereyn
That may be founde in any man,
For having, or for wit he can,
That is, his tonge to refreyne ;
Therto ought every wight him peyne.

For it is better stille be
Than for to speken harm, pardee!
And he that herkeneth it gladly,
He is no good man, sikerly.
And, sir, aboven al other sinne,
In that art thou most gilty inne.
Thou spake a jape not long ago,
(And, sir, that was righte yvel do)
Of a yong man that here repaired,
And never yet this place apaired.
Thou seydest he awaited nothing
But to disceyve Fair-Welcoming.
Ye seyde nothing sooth of that;
But, sir, ye lye; I tell you plat;
He ne cometh no more, ne goth, pardee!
I trow ye shal him never see.
Fair-Welcoming in prison is,
That ofte hath pleyed with you, er this,
The fairest games that he coude,
Withoute filthe, stille or loude;
Now dar he nat himself solace.
Ye han also the man do chace,
That he dar neither come ne go.
What meveth you to hate him so
But properly your wikked thought,
That many a fals lesing hath thought?
That meveth your foole eloquence,
That jangleth ever in audience,
And on the folk areyseth blame,
And doth hem dishonour and shame,
For thing that may have no preving,
But lyklinesse, and contriving.
For I dar seyn, that Reson demeth,
It is not al sooth thing that semeth
And it is sinne to controve
Thing that is for to reprove;
This wot ye wel; and, sir, therefore
Ye arn to blame wel the more.
And, nathelesse, he rekketh lyte;
He yeveth nat now thereof a myte;

For if he thoughte harm, parfay,
He wolde come and gon al day;
He coude him-selfe nat abstene.
Now cometh he nat, and that is sene,
For he ne taketh of it no cure,
But-if it be through aventure,
And lasse than other folk, algate.
And thou here watchest at the gate,
With spere in thyne arest alway;
There muse, musard, al the day.
Thou wakest night and day for thought;
Y-wis, thy traveyl is for nought.
And Jelousye, withouten faile,
Shal never quyte thee thy travaile.
And scathe is, that Fair-Welcoming,
Withouten any trespassing,
Shal wrongfully in prison be,
Ther wepeth and languissheth he.
And though thou never yet, y-wis,
Agiltest man no more but this,
(Take not a-greef) it were worthy
To putte thee out of this baily,
And afterward in prison lye,
And fettre thee til that thou dye;
For thou shalt for this sinne dwelle
Right in the devils ers of helle,
But-if that thou repente thee.'
'Ma fay, thou lyest falsly!' quod he.
'What? welcome with mischaunce now!
Have I therfore herbered you
To seye me shame, and eek reprove?
With sory happe, to your bihove,
Am I to-day your herbergere!
Go, herber you elleswhere than here,
That han a lyer called me!
Two tregetours art thou and he,
That in myn hous do me this shame,
And for my soth-sawe ye me blame.
Is this the sermoun that ye make?
To alle the develles I me take,

Or elles, god, thou me confounde:
But er men diden this castel founde,
It passeth not ten dayes or twelve,
But it was told right to my-selve,
And as they seide, right so tolde I,
He kiste the Rose privily!
Thus seide I now, and have seid yore;
I not wher he dide any more.
Why shulde men sey me such a thing,
If it hadde been gabbing?
Right so seide I, and wol seye yit;
I trowe, I lyed not of it;
And with my bemes I wol blowe
To alle neighboris a-rowe,
How he hath bothe comen and gon.'
Tho spak Fals-Semblant right anon,
'All is not gospel, out of doute,
That men seyn in the toune aboute;
Ley no deef ere to my speking;
I swere yow, sir, it is gabbing!
I trowe ye wot wel certeynly,
That no man loveth him tenderly
That seith him harm, if he wot it,
Al be he never so pore of wit.
And sooth is also sikerly,
(This knowe ye, sir, as wel as I),
That lovers gladly wol visyten
The places ther hir loves habyten.
This man you loveth and eek honoureth;
This man to serve you laboureth;
And clepeth you his freend so dere,
And this man maketh you good chere,
And every-wher that he you meteth,
He you saleweth, and he you greteth.
He preseth not so ofte, that ye
Ought of his come encombred be;
Ther presen other folk on yow
Ful ofter than that he doth now.
And if his herte him streyned so
Unto the Rose for to go,

Ye shulde him seen so ofte nede,
That ye shulde take him with the dede.
He coude his coming not forbere,
Though ye him thrilled with a spere;
It nere not thanne as it is now.
But trusteth wel, I swere it yow,
That it is clene out of his thought.
Sir, certes, he ne thenketh it nought;
No more ne doth Fair-Welcoming,
That sore abyeth al this thing.
And if they were of oon assent,
Ful sone were the Rose hent;
The maugre youres wolde be.
And sir, of o thing herkeneth me:—
Sith ye this man, that loveth yow,
Han seid such harm and shame now,
Witeth wel, if he gessed it,
Ye may wel demen in your wit,
He nolde no-thing love you so,
Ne callen you his freend also,
But night and day he wolde wake,
The castel to destroye and take,
If it were sooth as ye devyse;
Or som man in som maner wyse
Might it warne him everydel,
Or by him-self perceyven wel;
For sith he might not come and gon
As he was whylom wont to don,
He might it sone wite and see;
But now al other-wyse doth he.
Than have ye, sir, al-outerly
Deserved helle, and jolyly
The deth of helle, douteles,
That thrallen folk so gilteles.'
Fals-Semblant proveth so this thing
That he can noon answering,
And seeth alwey such apparaunce,
That nygh he fel in repentaunce,
And seide him:—'Sir, it may wel be.
Semblant, a good man semen ye;

And, Abstinence, ful wyse ye seme;
Of o talent you bothe I deme.
What counceil wole ye to me yeven?'

F. Sem. 'Right here anoon thou shalt be shriven,
And sey thy sinne withoute more;
Of this shalt thou repente sore;
For I am preest, and have poustee
To shryve folk of most dignitee
That been, as wyde as world may dure.
Of al this world I have the cure,
And that had never yit persoun,
No vicarie of no maner toun.
And, god wot, I have of thee
A thousand tymes more pitee
Than hath thy preest parochial,
Though he thy freend be special.
I have avauntage, in o wyse,
That your prelates ben not so wyse
Ne half so lettred as am I.
I am licenced boldely
In divinitee to rede,
And to confessen, out of drede.
If ye wol you now confesse,
And leve your sinnes more and lesse,
Without abood, knele doun anon,
And you shal have absolucion.'

Explicit.

THE MINOR POEMS

I. AN A. B. C.

Incipit carmen secundum ordinem literarum Alphabeti

Almighty and al merciable quene,
To whom that al this world fleeth for socour,
To have relees of sinne, sorwe and tene,
Glorious virgine, of alle floures flour,
To thee I flee, confounded in errour!
Help and releve, thou mighty debonaire,
Have mercy on my perilous langour!
Venquisshed m' hath my cruel adversaire.

Bountee so fix hath in thyn herte his tente,
That wel I wot thou wolt my socour be,
Thou canst not warne him that, with good entente,
Axeth thyn help. Thyn herte is ay so free,
Thou art largesse of pleyn felicitee,
Haven of refut, of quiete and of reste.
Lo, how that theves seven chasen me!
Help, lady bright, er that my ship to-breste!

Comfort is noon, but in yow, lady dere;
For lo, my sinne and my confusioun,
Which oughten not in thy presence appere,
Han take on me a grevous accioun
Of verrey right and desperacioun;
And, as by right, they mighten wel sustene
That I were worthy my dampnacioun,
Nere mercy of you, blisful hevene quene.

Doute is ther noon, thou queen of misericorde,
That thou n'art cause of grace and mercy here;
God vouched sauf thurgh thee with us t'acorde.
For certes, Cristes blisful moder dere,
Were now the bowe bent in swich manere,
As it was first, of justice and of yre,
The rightful God nolde of no mercy here;
But thurgh thee han we grace, as we desyre.

Ever hath myn hope of refut been in thee,
For heer-biforn ful ofte, in many a wyse,
Hast thou to misericorde receyved me.
But mercy, lady, at the grete assyse,
Whan we shul come bifore the hye justyse!
So litel fruit shal thanne in me be founde,
That, but thou er that day me wel chastyse,
Of verrey right my werk me wol confounde.

Fleeing, I flee for socour to thy tente
Me for to hyde from tempest ful of drede,
Biseching you that ye you not absente,
Though I be wikke. O help yit at this nede!
Al have I been a beste in wille and dede,
Yit, lady, thou me clothe with thy grace.
Thyn enemy and myn (lady, tak hede)
Un-to my deeth in poynt is me to chace.

Glorious mayde and moder, which that never
Were bitter, neither in erthe nor in see,
But ful of swetnesse and of mercy ever,
Help that my fader be not wroth with me!
Spek thou, for I ne dar not him y-see.
So have I doon in erthe, allas ther-whyle!
That certes, but-if thou my socour be,
To stink eterne he wol my gost exyle.

He vouched sauf, tel him, as was his wille,
Bicome a man, to have our alliaunce,
And with his precious blood he wroot the bille
Up-on the crois, as general acquitaunce,

To every penitent in ful creaunce ;
And therfor, lady bright, thou for us praye.
Than shalt thou bothe stinte al his grevaunce,
And make our foo to failen of his praye.

I wot it wel, thou wolt ben our socour,
Thou art so ful of bountee, in certeyn.
For, whan a soule falleth in errour,
Thy pitee goth and haleth him ayeyn.
Than makest thou his pees with his sovereyn,
And bringest him out of the crooked strete.
Who-so thee loveth he shal not love in veyn,
That shal he finde, as he the lyf shal lete.

Kalenderes enlumined ben they
That in this world ben lighted with thy name,
And who-so goth to you the righte wey,
Him thar not drede in soule to be lame.
Now, queen of comfort, sith thou art that same
To whom I seche for my medicyne,
Lat not my foo no more my wounde entame,
Myn hele in-to thyn hand al I resigne.

Lady, thy sorwe can I not-portreye
Under the cros, ne his grevous penaunce.
But, for your bothes peynes, I you preye,
Lat not our alder foo make his bobaunce,
That he hath in his listes of mischaunce
Convict that ye bothe have bought so dere.
As I seide erst, thou ground of our substaunce,
Continue on us thy pitous eyen clere !

Moises, that saugh the bush with flaumes rede
Brenninge, of which ther never a stikke brende,
Was signe of thyn unwemmed maidenhede.
Thou art the bush on which ther gan descende
The Holy Gost, the which that Moises wende
Had ben a-fyr ; and this was in figure.
Now lady, from the fyr thou us defende
Which that in helle eternally shal dure.

Noble princesse, that never haddest pere,
Certes, if any comfort in us be,
That cometh of thee, thou Cristes moder dere,
We han non other melodye or glee
Us to rejoyse in our adversitee,
N' advocat noon that wol and dar so preye
For us, and that for litel hyre as ye,
That helpen for an Ave-Marie or tweye.

O verrey light of eyen that ben blinde,
O verrey lust of labour and distresse,
O tresorere of bountee to mankinde,
Thee whom God chees to moder for humblesse!
From his ancille he made thee maistresse
Of hevene and erthe, our bille up for to bede.
This world awaiteth ever on thy goodnesse,
For thou ne failest never wight at nede.

Purpos I have sum tyme for t'enquere,
Wherfore and why the Holy Gost thee soughte,
Whan Gabrielles vois cam to thyn ere.
He not to werre us swich a wonder wroughte,
But for to save us that he sithen boughte.
That nedeth us no wepen us for to save,
But only ther we did not, as us oughte,
Do penitence, and mercy axe and have.

Queen of comfort, yit whan I me bithink
That I agilt have bothe, him and thee,
And that my soule is worthy for to sinke,
Allas, I, caitif, whider may I flee?
Who shal un-to thy sone my mene be?
Who, but thy-self, that art of pitee welle?
Thou hast more reuthe on our adversitee
Than in this world mighte any tunge telle.

Redresse me, moder, and me chastyse,
For, certeynly, my fadres chastisinge
That dar I nought abyden in no wyse:
So hidous is his rightful rekeninge.

Moder, of whom our mercy gan to springe,
Beth ye my juge and eek my soules leche ;
For ever in you is pitee haboundinge
To ech that wol of pitee you biseche.

Soth is, that God ne graunteth no pitee
With-oute thee ; for God, of his goodnesse,
Foryiveth noon, but it lyke un-to thee.
He hath thee maked vicaire and maistresse
Of al the world, and eek governeresse
Of hevene, and he represseth his justyse
After thy wille, and therefore in witnesse
He hath thee crouned in so ryal wyse.

Temple devout, ther god hath his woninge,
Fro which these misbileved pryved been,
To you my soule penitent I bringe.
Receyve me ! I can no ferther fleen !
With thornes venimous, O hevene queen,
For which the erthe acursed was ful yore,
I am so wounded, as ye may wel seen,
That I am lost almost ;—it smert so sore.

Virgine, that art so noble of apparaile,
And ledest us in-to the hye tour
Of Paradys, thou me wisse and counsaile,
How I may have thy grace and thy socour ;
Al have I been in filthe and in errour.
Lady, un-to that court thou me ajourne
That cleped is thy bench, O fresshe flour !
Ther-as that mercy ever shal sojourne.

Xristus, thy sone, that in this world alighte,
Up-on the cros to suffre his passioun,
And eek, that Longius his herte pighte,
And made his herte blood to renne adoun ;
And al was this for my salvacioun ;
And I to him am fals and eek unkinde,
And yit he wol not my dampnacioun—
This thanke I you, socour of al mankinde.

Ysaac was figure of his deeth, certeyn,
That so fer-forth his fader wolde obeye
That him ne roughte no-thing to be slayn;
Right so thy sone list, as a lamb, to deye.
Now lady, ful of mercy, I you preye,
Sith he his mercy mesured so large,
Be ye not skant; for alle we singe and seye
That ye ben from vengeaunce ay our targe.

Zacharie you clepeth the open welle
To wasshe sinful soule out of his gilt.
Therfore this lessoun oughte I wel to telle
That, nere thy tender herte, we weren spilt.
Now lady brighte, sith thou canst and wilt
Ben to the seed of Adam merciable,
So bring us to that palais that is bilt
To penitents that ben to mercy able. Amen.

Explicit carmen.

II. THE COMPLEYNTE UNTO PITE

Pite, that I have sought so yore ago,
With herte sore, and ful of besy peyne,
That in this world was never wight so wo
With-oute dethe; and, if I shal not feyne,
My purpos was, to Pite to compleyne
Upon the crueltee and tirannye
Of Love, that for my trouthe doth me dye.

And when that I, by lengthe of certeyn yeres,
Had ever in oon a tyme sought to speke,
To Pite ran I, al bespreynt with teres,
To preyen hir on Crueltee m' awreke.
But, er I might with any worde outbreke,
Or tellen any of my peynes smerte,
I fond hir deed, and buried in an herte.

Adoun I fel, when that I saugh the herse,
Deed as a stoon, whyl that the swogh me laste;
But up I roos, with colour ful diverse,
And pitously on hir myn yën caste,
And ner the corps I gan to presen faste,
And for the soule I shoop me for to preye;
I nas but lorn; ther nas no more to seye.

Thus am I slayn, sith that Pite is deed;
Allas! that day! that ever hit shulde falle!
What maner man dar now holde up his heed?
To whom shal any sorwful herte calle?
Now Crueltee hath cast to sleen us alle,
In ydel hope, folk redelees of peyne—
Sith she is deed—to whom shul we compleyne?

But yet encreseth me this wonder newe,
That no wight woot that she is deed, but I ;
So many men as in hir tyme hir knewe,
And yet she dyed not so sodeynly ;
For I have sought hir ever ful besily
Sith first I hadde wit or mannes minde ;
But she was deed, er that I coude hir finde.

Aboute hir herse ther stoden lustily,
Withouten any wo, as thoughte me,
Bountee parfit, wel armed and richely,
And fresshe Beautee, Lust, and Jolitee,
Assured Maner, Youthe, and Honestee,
Wisdom, Estaat, and Dreed, and Governaunce,
Confedred bothe by bonde and alliaunce.

A compleynt hadde I, writen, in myn hond,
For to have put to Pite as a bille,
But whan I al this companye ther fond,
That rather wolden all my cause spille
Than do me help, I held my pleynte stille ;
For to that folk, withouten any faile,
Withoute Pite may no bille availe.

Then leve I al thise virtues, sauf Pite,
Keping the corps, as ye have herd me seyn,
Confedred alle by bonde of Crueltee,
And been assented that I shal be sleyn.
And I have put my compleynt up ageyn ;
For to my foos my bille I dar not shewe,
Theffect of which seith thus, in wordes fewe :—

The Bille

‘ Humblest of herte, hyest of reverence,
Benigne flour, coroune of vertues alle,
Sheweth unto your rial excellence
Your servaunt, if I durste me so calle,
His mortal harm, in which he is y-falle,
And noght al only for his evel fare,
But for your renoun, as he shal declare.

'Hit stondeth thus: your contraire, Crueltee,
Allyed is ageynst your regalye
Under colour of womanly Beautee,
For men ne shuld not knowe hir tirannye,
With Bountee, Gentilesse, and Curtesye,
And hath depryved you now of your place
That hight "Beautee, apertenant to Grace."

'For kindly, by your heritage right,
Ye been annexed ever unto Bountee;
And verrayly ye oughte do your might
To helpe Trouthe in his adversitee.
Ye been also the coroune of Beautee;
And certes, if ye wanten in thise tweyne,
The world is lore; ther nis no more to seyne

'Eek what availeth Maner and Gentilesse
Withoute you, benigne creature?
Shal Crueltee be your governeresse?
Allas! what herte may hit longe endure?
Wherfor, but ye the rather take cure
To breke that perilous alliaunce,
Ye sleen hem that ben in your obeisaunce.

'And further over, if ye suffre this,
Your renoun is fordo than in a throwe;
Ther shal no man wite wel what Pite is.
Allas! that your renoun shuld be so lowe!
Ye be that fro your heritage y-throwe
By Crueltee, that occupieth your place;
And we despeired, that seken to your grace.

'Have mercy on me, thou Herenus quene,
That you have sought so tenderly and yore;
Let som streem of your light on me be sene
That love and drede you, ay lenger the more.
For, sothly for to seyne, I bere the sore,
And, though I be not cunning for to pleyne,
For goddes love, have mercy on my peyne!

'My peyne is this, that what so I desire
That have I not, ne no-thing lyk therto;
And ever set Desire myn herte on fire;
Eek on that other syde, wher-so I go,
What maner thing that may encrese wo
That have I redy, unsoght, everywhere;
Me ne lakketh but my deth, and than my bere.

'What nedeth to shewe parcel of my peyne?
Sith every wo that herte may bethinke
I suffre, and yet I dar not to you pleyne;
For wel I woot, al-though I wake or winke,
Ye rekke not whether I flete or sinke.
But natheles, my trouthe I shal sustene
Unto my deeth, and that shal wel be sene.

'This is to seyne, I wol be youres ever;
Though ye me slee by Crueltee, your fo,
Algate my spirit shal never dissever
Fro your servyse, for any peyne or wo.
Sith ye be deed—allas! that hit is so!—
Thus for your deth I may wel wepe and pleyne
With herte sore and ful of besy peyne.'

Here endeth the exclamacion of the Deth of Pyte.

III. THE BOOK OF THE DUCHESSE

The Proem

I have gret wonder, by this lighte,
How that I live, for day ne nighte
I may nat slepe wel nigh noght;
I have so many an ydel thoght
Purely for defaute of slepe,
That, by my trouthe, I take kepe
Of no-thing, how hit cometh or goth,
Ne me nis no-thing leef nor loth.
Al is y-liche good to me—
Joye or sorowe, wherso hit be—
For I have feling in no-thing,
But, as it were, a mased thing,
Alway in point to falle a-doun;
For sory imaginacioun
Is alway hoolly in my minde.
And wel ye woot, agaynes kinde
Hit were to liven in this wyse;
For nature wolde nat suffyse
To noon erthely creature
Not longe tyme to endure
Withoute slepe, and been in sorwe;
And I ne may, ne night ne morwe,
Slepe; and thus melancolye,
And dreed I have for to dye,
Defaute of slepe, and hevinesse
Hath sleyn my spirit of quiknesse,
That I have lost al lustihede.

Suche fantasyes ben in myn hede
So I not what is best to do.
But men mighte axe me, why so
I may not slepe, and what me is?
But natheles, who aske this
Leseth his asking trewely.
My-selven can not telle why
The sooth; but trewely, as I gesse,
I holdë hit be a siknesse
That I have suffred this eight yere,
And yet my bote is never the nere;
For ther is phisicien but oon,
That may me hele; but that is doon.
Passe we over until eft;
That wil not be, moot nede be left;
Our first matere is good to kepe.
So whan I saw I might not slepe,
Til now late, this other night,
Upon my bedde I sat upright,
And bad oon reche me a book,
A romaunce, and he hit me took
To rede and dryve the night away;
For me thoghte it better play
Than playen either at chesse or tables.
And in this boke were writen fables
That clerkes hadde, in olde tyme,
And other poets, put in ryme
To rede, and for to be in minde
Whyl men loved the lawe of kinde.
This book ne spak but of such thinges,
Of quenes lyves, and of kinges,
And many othere thinges smale.
Amonge al this I fond a tale
That me thoughte a wonder thing.
This was the tale: Ther was a king
That highte Seys, and hadde a wyf,
The beste that mighte bere lyf;
And this quene highte Alcyone.
So hit befel, therafter sone,
This king wolde wenden over see.

To tellen shortly, whan that he
Was in the see, thus in this wyse,
Soche a tempest gan to ryse
That brak hir mast, and made it falle,
And clefte hir ship, and dreinte hem alle,
That never was founden, as it telles,
Bord ne man, ne nothing elles.
Right thus this king Seys loste his lyf.
Now for to speken of his wyf:—
This lady, that was left at home,
Hath wonder, that the king ne come
Hoom, for hit was a longe terme.
Anon her herte gan to erme;
And for that hir thoughte evermo
Hit was not wel he dwelte so,
She longed so after the king
That certes, hit were a pitous thing
To telle hir hertely sorwful lyf
That hadde, alas! this noble wyf;
For him she loved alderbest.
Anon she sente bothe eest and west
To seke him, but they founde nought.
'Alas!' quoth she, 'that I was wrought!
And wher my lord, my love, be deed?
Certes, I nil never ete breed,
I make a-vowe to my god here,
But I mowe of my lorde here!'
Such sorwe this lady to her took
That trewely I, which made this book,
Had swich pite and swich rowthe
To rede hir sorwe, that, by my trowthe,
I ferde the worse al the morwe
After, to thenken on hir sorwe.
So whan she coude here no word
That no man mighte finde hir lord,
Ful oft she swouned, and seide 'alas!'
For sorwe ful nigh wood she was,
Ne she coude no reed but oon;
But doun on knees she sat anoon,
And weep, that pite was to here.

'A! mercy! swete lady dere!'
Quod she to Juno, hir goddesse;
'Help me out of this distresse,
And yeve me grace my lord to see
Sone, or wite wher-so he be,
Or how he fareth, or in what wyse,
And I shal make you sacrifyse,
And hoolly youres become I shal
With good wil, body, herte, and al;
And but thou wilt this, lady swete,
Send me grace to slepe, and mete
In my slepe som certeyn sweven,
Wher-through that I may knowen even
Whether my lord be quik or deed.'
With that word she heng doun the heed,
And fil a-swown as cold as ston;
Hir women caughte her up anon,
And broghten hir in bed al naked,
And she, forweped and forwaked,
Was wery, and thus the dede sleep
Fil on her, or she toke keep,
Through Juno, that had herd hir bone,
That made hir for to slepe sone;
For as she prayde, so was don,
In dede; for Juno, right anon,
Called thus her messagere
To do her erande, and he com nere.
Whan he was come, she bad him thus:
'Go bet,' quod Juno, 'to Morpheus,
Thou knowest him wel, the god of sleep;
Now understond wel, and tak keep.
Sey thus on my halfe, that he
Go faste into the grete see,
And bid him that, on alle thing,
He take up Seys body the king,
That lyth ful pale and no-thing rody.
Bid him crepe into the body,
And do it goon to Alcyone
The quene, ther she lyth alone,
And shewe hir shortly, hit is no nay,

How hit was dreynt this other day ;
And do the body speke so
Right as hit was wont to do,
The whyles that hit was on lyve.
Go now faste, and hy thee blyve !'
This messager took leve and wente
Upon his wey, and never ne stente
Til he com to the derke valeye
That stant bytwene roches tweye,
Ther never yet grew corn ne gras,
Ne tree, ne nothing that ought was,
Beste, ne man, ne nothing elles,
Save ther were a fewe welles
Came renning fro the cliffes adoun,
That made a deedly sleping soun,
And ronnen doun right by a cave
That was under a rokke y-grave
Amid the valey, wonder depe.
Ther thise goddes laye and slepe,
Morpheus, and Eclympasteyre,
That was the god of slepes heyre,
That slepe and did non other werk.
This cave was also as derk
As helle pit over-al aboute ;
They had good leyser for to route
To envye, who might slepe beste ;
Some henge hir chin upon hir breste
And slepe upright, hir heed y-hed,
And some laye naked in hir bed,
And slepe whyles the dayes laste.
This messager com flying faste,
And cryed, 'O ho ! awak anon !'
Hit was for noght ; ther herde him non.
'Awak !' quod he, 'who is, lyth there ?'
And blew his horn right in hir ere,
And cryed 'awaketh !' wonder hyë.
This god of slepe, with his oon yë
Cast up, axed, 'who clepeth there ?'
'Hit am I,' quod this messagere ;
'Juno bad thou shuldest goon'—

And tolde him what he shulde doon
As I have told yow here-tofore;
Hit is no need reherse hit more;
And wente his wey, whan he had sayd.
Anon this god of slepe a-brayd
Out of his slepe, and gan to goon,
And did as he had bede him doon;
Took up the dreynte body sone,
And bar hit forth to Alcyone,
His wyf the quene, ther-as she lay,
Right even a quarter before day,
And stood right at hir beddes fete,
And called hir, right as she hete,
By name, and seyde, 'my swete wyf,
Awak! let be your sorwful lyf!
For in your sorwe ther lyth no reed;
For certes, swete, I nam but deed;
Ye shul me never on lyve y-see.
But good swete herte, look that ye
Bury my body, at whiche a tyde
Ye mowe hit finde the see besyde;
And far-wel, swete, my worldes blisse!
I praye god your sorwe lisse;
To litel whyl our blisse lasteth!
With that hir eyen up she casteth,
And saw noght; 'A!' quod she, 'for sorwe!'
And deyed within the thridde morwe.
But what she sayde more in that swow
I may not telle yow as now,
Hit were to longe for to dwelle;
My first matere I wil yow telle,
Wherfor I have told this thing
Of Alcione and Seys the king.
For thus moche dar I saye wel,
I had be dolven everydel,
And deed, right through defaute of sleep,
If I nad red and taken keep
Of this tale next before:
And I wol telle yow wherfore;
For I ne might, for bote ne bale,

Slepe, or I had red this tale
Of this dreynte Seys the king,
And of the goddes of sleping.
Whan I had red this tale wel,
And over-loked hit everydel,
Me thoughte wonder if hit were so;
For I had never herd speke, or tho,
Of no goddes that coude make
Men for to slepe, ne for to wake;
For I ne knew never god but oon.
And in my game I sayde anoon—
And yet me list right evel to pleye—
'Rather then that I shulde deye
Through defaute of sleping thus,
I wolde yive thilke Morpheus,
Or his goddesse, dame Juno,
Or som wight elles, I ne roghte who—
To make me slepe and have som reste—
I wil yive him the alder-beste
Yift that ever he abood his lyve,
And here on warde, right now, as blyve;
If he wol make me slepe a lyte,
Of downe of pure dowves whyte
I wil yive him a fether-bed,
Rayed with golde, and right wel cled
In fyn blak satin doutremere,
And many a pilow, and every bere
Of clothe of Reynes, to slepe softe;
Him thar not nede to turnen ofte.
And I wol yive him al that falles
To a chambre; and al his halles
I wol do peynte with pure golde,
And tapite hem ful many folde
Of oo sute; this shal he have,
If I wiste wher were his cave,
If he can make me slepe sone,
As did the goddesse Alcione.
And thus this ilke god, Morpheus,
May winne of me mo feës thus
Than ever he wan; and to Juno,

That is his goddesse, I shal so do,
I trow that she shal holde her payd.'
I hadde unneth that word y-sayd
Right thus as I have told yit yow,
That sodeynly, I niste how,
Swich a lust anoon me took
To slepe, that right upon my book
I fil aslepe, and therwith even
Me mette so inly swete a sweven,
So wonderful, that never yit
I trowe no man hadde the wit
To conne wel my sweven rede;
No, not Joseph, withoute drede,
Of Egipte, he that redde so
The kinges meting Pharao,
No more than coude the leste of us;
Ne nat scarsly Macrobeus,
(He that wroot al th'avisioun
That he mette, king Scipioun,
The noble man, the Affrican—
Swiche mervayles fortuned than)
I trowe, a-rede my dremes even.
Lo, thus hit was, this was my sweven.

The Dream

Me thoughte thus:—that hit was May,
And in the dawning ther I lay,
Me mette thus, in my bed al naked:—
I loked forth, for I was waked
With smale foules a gret hepe,
That had affrayed me out of slepe
Through noyse and swetnesse of hir song;
And, as me mette, they sate among,
Upon my chambre-roof withoute,
Upon the tyles, al a-boute,
And songen, everich in his wyse,
The moste solempne servyse
By note, that ever man, I trowe,
Had herd; for som of hem song lowe,

Som hye, and al of oon acorde.
To telle shortly, at oo worde,
Was never y-herd so swete a steven,
But hit had be a thing of heven ;—
So mery a soun, so swete entunes,
That certes, for the toune of Tewnes,
I nolde but I had herd hem singe ;
For al my chambre gan to ringe
Through singing of hir armonye.
For instrument nor melodye
Was nowher herd yet half so swete,
Nor of acorde half so mete ;
For ther was noon of hem that feyned
To singe, for ech of hem him peyned
To finde out mery crafty notes ;
They ne spared not hir throtes.
And, sooth to seyn, my chambre was
Ful wel depeynted, and with glas
Were al the windowes wel y-glased,
Ful clere, and nat an hole y-crased,
That to beholde hit was gret joye.
For hoolly al the storie of Troye
Was in the glasing y-wroght thus,
Of Ector and king Priamus,
Of Achilles and Lamedon,
Of Medea and of Jason,
Of Paris, Eleyne, and Lavyne.
And alle the walles with colours fyne
Were peynted, bothe text and glose,
Of al the Romaunce of the Rose.
My windowes weren shet echon,
And through the glas the sunne shon
Upon my bed with brighte bemes,
With many glade gilden stremes ;
And eek the welken was so fair,
Blew, bright, clere was the air,
And ful atempre, for sothe, hit was ;
For nother cold nor hoot hit nas,
Ne in al the welken was a cloude.
And as I lay thus, wonder loude

Me thoughte I herde an hunte blowe
T' assaye his horn, and for to knowe
Whether hit were clere or hors of soune.
I herde goinge, up and doune,
Men, hors, houndes, and other thing;
And al men speken of hunting,
How they wolde slee the hert with strengthe,
And how the hert had, upon lengthe,
So moche embosed, I not now what.
Anon-right, whan I herde that,
How that they wolde on hunting goon,
I was right glad, and up anoon;
I took my hors, and forth I wente
Out of my chambre; I never stente
Til I com to the feld withoute.
Ther overtook I a gret route
Of huntes and eek of foresteres,
With many relayes and lymeres,
And hyed hem to the forest faste,
And I with hem;—so at the laste
I asked oon, ladde a lymere:—
'Say, felow, who shal hunten here?'
Quod I; and he answerde ageyn,
'Sir, th'emperour Octovien,'
Quod he, 'and is heer faste by.'
'A goddes halfe, in good tyme,' quod I,
'Go we faste!' and gan to ryde.
Whan we came to the forest-syde,
Every man dide, right anoon,
As to hunting fil to doon.
The mayster-hunte anoon, fot-hoot,
With a gret horne blew three moot
At the uncoupling of his houndes.
Within a whyl the hert y-founde is,
Y-halowed, and rechased faste
Long tyme; and at the laste,
This hert rused and stal away
Fro alle the houndes a prevy way.
The houndes had overshote hem alle,
And were on a defaute y-falle;

Therwith the hunte wonder faste
Blew a forloyn at the laste.
I was go walked fro my tree,
And as I wente, ther cam by me
A whelp, that fauned me as I stood,
That hadde y-folowed, and coude no good.
Hit com and creep to me as lowe,
Right as hit hadde me y-knowe,
Hild doon his heed and joyned his eres,
And leyde al smothe doun his heres.
I wolde han caught hit, and anoon
Hit fledde, and was fro me goon;
And I him folwed, and hit forth wente
Doun by a floury grene wente
Ful thikke of gras, ful softe and swete,
With floures fele, faire under fete,
And litel used, hit seemed thus;
For bothe Flora and Zephirus,
They two that make floures growe,
Had mad hir dwelling ther, I trowe;
For hit was, on to beholde,
As thogh the erthe envye wolde
To be gayer than the heven,
To have mo floures, swiche seven
As in the welken sterres be.
Hit had forgete the povertee
That winter, through his colde morwes,
Had mad hit suffren, and his sorwes;
Al was forgeten, and that was sene.
For al the wode was waxen grene,
Swetnesse of dewe had mad it waxe.
Hit is no need eek for to axe
Wher ther were many grene greves,
Or thikke of trees, so ful of leves;
And every tree stood by him-selve
Fro other wel ten foot or twelve.
So grete trees, so huge of strengthe,
Of fourty or fifty fadme lengthe,
Clene withoute bough or stikke,
With croppes brode, and eek as thikke—

They were nat an inche a-sonder—
That hit was shadwe over-al under;
And many an hert and many an hinde
Was both before me and bihinde.
Of founes, soures, bukkes, doës
Was ful the wode, and many roës,
And many squirelles, that sete
Ful hye upon the trees, and ete,
And in hir maner made festes.
Shortly, hit was so ful of bestes,
That thogh Argus, the noble countour,
Sete to rekene in his countour,
And rekened with his figures ten—
For by tho figures mowe al ken,
If they be crafty, rekene and noumbre,
And telle of every thing the noumbre—
Yet shulde he fayle to rekene even
The wondres, me mette in my sweven.
But forth they romed wonder faste
Doun the wode; so at the laste
I was war of a man in blak,
That sat and had y-turned his bak
To an oke, an huge tree.
'Lord,' thoghte I, 'who may that be?
What ayleth him to sitten here?'
Anoon-right I wente nere;
Than fond I sitte even upright
A wonder wel-faringe knight—
By the maner me thoughte so—
Of good mochel, and yong therto,
Of the age of four and twenty yeer.
Upon his berde but litel heer,
And he was clothed al in blakke.
I stalked even unto his bakke,
And ther I stood as stille as ought,
That, sooth to saye, he saw me nought,
For-why he heng his heed adoune.
And with a deedly sorwful soune
He made of ryme ten vers or twelve,
Of a compleynt to him-selve,

The moste pite, the moste rowthe,
That ever I herde; for, by my trowthe,
Hit was gret wonder that nature
Might suffren any creature
To have swich sorwe, and be not deed.
Ful pitous, pale, and nothing reed,
He sayde a lay, a maner song,
Withoute note, withoute song,
And hit was this; for wel I can
Reherse hit; right thus hit began.—
'I have of sorwe so gret woon,
That joye gete I never noon,
Now that I see my lady bright,
Which I have loved with al my might,
Is fro me deed, and is a-goon.
Allas, o deeth! what ayleth thee,
That thou noldest have taken me,
Whan that thou toke my lady swete?
That was so fayr, so fresh, so free,
So good, that men may wel y-see
Of al goodnesse she had no mete!'—
Whan he had mad thus his complaynte,
His sorowful herte gan faste faynte,
And his spirites wexen dede;
The blood was fled, for pure drede,
Doun to his herte, to make him warm—
For wel hit feled the herte had harm—
To wite eek why hit was a-drad
By kinde, and for to make hit glad;
For hit is membre principal
Of the body; and that made al
His hewe chaunge and wexe grene
And pale, for no blood was sene
In no maner lime of his.
Anoon therwith whan I saw this,
He ferde thus evel ther he sete,
I wente and stood right at his fete,
And grettë him, but he spak noght,
But argued with his owne thoght,
And in his witte disputed faste

Why and how his lyf might laste ;
Him thoughte his sorwes were so smerte
And lay so colde upon his herte ;
So, through his sorwe and hevy thoght,
Made him that he ne herde me noght ;
For he had wel nigh lost his minde,
Thogh Pan, that men clepe god of kinde,
Were for his sorwes never so wrooth.
But at the laste, to sayn right sooth,
He was war of me, how I stood
Before him, and dide of myn hood,
And grettë him, as I best coude.
Debonairly, and no-thing loude,
He sayde, 'I prey thee, be not wrooth,
I herde thee not, to sayn the sooth,
Ne I saw thee not, sir, trewely.'
'A ! goode sir, no fors,' quod I,
'I am right sory if I have ought
Destroubled yow out of your thought ;
For-yive me if I have mis-take.'
'Yis, th' amendes is light to make,'
Quod he, 'for ther lyth noon ther-to ;
Ther is no-thing missayd nor do.'
Lo ! how goodly spak this knight,
As it had been another wight ;
He made it nouther tough ne queynte.
And I saw that, and gan me aqueynte
With him, and fond him so tretable,
Right wonder skilful and resonable,
As me thoghte, for al his bale.
Anoon-right I gan finde a tale
To him, to loke wher I might ought
Have more knowing of his thought.
'Sir,' quod I, 'this game is doon ;
I holde that this hert be goon ;
Thise huntes conne him nowher see.'
'I do no fors therof,' quod he,
'My thought is ther-on never a del.'
'By our lord,' quod I, 'I trow yow wel,
Right so me thinketh by your chere.

But, sir, oo thing wol ye here?
Me thinketh, in gret sorwe I yow see;
But certes, good sir, yif that ye
Wolde ought discure me your wo,
I wolde, as wis god helpe me so,
Amende hit, yif I can or may;
Ye mowe preve hit by assay.
For, by my trouthe, to make yow hool,
I wol do al my power hool;
And telleth me of your sorwes smerte,
Paraventure hit may ese your herte,
That semeth ful seke under your syde.'
With that he loked on me asyde,
As who sayth, 'nay, that wol not be.'
'Graunt mercy, gode frend,' quod he,
'I thanke thee that thou woldest so,
But hit may never the rather be do.
No man may my sorwe glade,
That maketh my hewe to falle and fade,
And hath myn understonding lorn,
That me is wo that I was born!
May noght make my sorwes slyde,
Nought the remedies of Ovyde;
Ne Orpheus, god of melodye,
Ne Dedalus, with playes slye;
Ne hele me may phisicien,
Noght Ipocras, ne Galien;
Me is wo that I live houres twelve;
But who so wol assaye him-selve
Whether his herte can have pite
Of any sorwe, lat him see me.
I wrecche, that deeth hath mad al naked
Of alle blisse that was ever maked,
Y-worthe worste of alle wightes,
That hate my dayes and my nightes;
My lyf, my lustes be me lothe,
For al welfare and I be wrothe.
The pure deeth is so my fo,
Thogh I wolde deye, hit wolde not so;
For whan I folwe hit, hit wol flee;

I wolde have hit, hit nil not me.
This is my peyne withoute reed,
Alway deying, and be not deed,
That Sesiphus, that lyth in helle,
May not of more sorwe telle.
And who so wiste al, by my trouthe,
My sorwe, but he hadde routhe
And pite of my sorwes smerte,
That man hath a feendly herte.
For who so seeth me first on morwe
May seyn, he hath y-met with sorwe;
For I am sorwe and sorwe is I.
'Allas! and I wol telle the why;
My song is turned to pleyning,
And al my laughter to weping,
My glade thoghtes to hevinesse,
In travaile is myn ydelnesse
And eek my reste; my wele is wo.
My good is harm, and ever-mo
In wrathe is turned my pleying,
And my delyt in-to sorwing.
Myn hele is turned into seeknesse,
In drede is al my sikernesse.
To derke is turned al my light,
My wit is foly, my day is night,
My love is hate, my sleep waking,
My mirthe and meles is fasting,
My countenaunce is nycete,
And al abaved wher-so I be,
My pees, in pleding and in werre;
Allas! how mighte I fare werre?
'My boldnesse is turned to shame,
For fals Fortune hath pleyd a game
Atte ches with me, allas! the whyle!
The trayteresse fals and ful of gyle,
That al behoteth and no-thing halt,
She goth upright and yet she halt,
That baggeth foule and loketh faire,
The dispitousë debonaire,
That scorneth many a creature!

An ydole of fals portraiture
Is she, for she wil sone wryen ;
She is the monstres heed y-wryen,
As filth over y-strawed with floures ;
Hir moste worship and hir flour is
To lyen, for that is hir nature ;
Withoute feyth, lawe, or mesure
She is fals ; and ever laughinge
With oon eye, and that other wepinge.
That is broght up, she set al doun.
I lykne hir to the scorpioun,
That is a fals flatering beste ;
For with his hede he maketh feste,
But al amid his flateringe
With his tayle he wol stinge,
And envenyme ; and so wol she.
She is th' envyous charite
That is ay fals, and semeth wele ;
So turneth she hir false whele
Aboute, for it is no-thing stable,
Now by the fyre, now at table ;
Ful many oon hath she thus y-blent.
She is pley of enchauntement,
That semeth oon and is nat so,
The false theef ! what hath she do,
Trowest thou ? by our lord, I wol thee seye.
Atte ches with me she gan to pleye ;
With hir false draughtes divers
She stal on me, and took my fers ;
And whan I saw my fers aweye,
Alas ! I couthe no lenger pleye,
But seyde, " farwel, swete, y-wis,
And farwel al that ever ther is ! "
Therwith Fortune seyde " chek here ! "
And " mate ! " in mid pointe of the chekkere
With a poune erraunt, allas !
Ful craftier to pley she was
Than Athalus, that made the game
First of the ches : so was his name.
But god wolde I had ones or twyes

Y-koud and knowe the jeupardyes
That coude the Grek Pithagores!
I shulde have pleyd the bet at ches,
And kept my fers the bet therby;
And thogh wherto? for trewely
I hold that wish nat worth a stree!
Hit had be never the bet for me.
For Fortune can so many a wyle,
Ther be but fewe can hir begyle,
And eek she is the las to blame;
My-self I wolde have do the same,
Before god, hadde I been as she;
She oghte the more excused be.
For this I say yet more therto,
Hadde I be god and mighte have do
My wille, whan my fers she caughte,
I wolde have drawe the same draughte.
For, also wis god yive me reste,
I dar wel swere she took the beste!
'But through that draughte I have lorn
My blisse; allas! that I was born!
For evermore, I trowe trewly,
For al my wil, my lust hoolly
Is turned; but yet, what to done?
By our lord, hit is to deye sone!
For no-thing I ne leve it noght,
But live and deye right in this thoght.
Ther nis planete in firmament,
Ne in air, ne in erthe, noon element,
That they ne yive me a yift echoon
Of weping, whan I am aloon.
For whan that I avyse me wel,
And bethenke me every-del,
How that ther lyth in rekening,
In my sorwe, for no-thing;
And how ther leveth no gladnesse
May gladde me of my distresse,
And how I have lost suffisance,
And therto I have no plesance,
Than may I say, I have right noght.

And whan al this falleth in my thoght,
Allas! than am I overcome!
For that is doon is not to come!
have more sorowe than Tantale.'
And whan I herde him telle this tale
Thus pitously, as I yow telle,
Unnethe mighte I lenger dwelle,
Hit dide myn herte so moche wo.
'A! good sir!' quod I, 'say not so!
Have som pite on your nature
That formed yow to creature;
Remembre yow of Socrates;
For he ne counted nat three strees
Of noght that Fortune coude do.'
'No,' quod he, 'I can not so.'
'Why so? good sir! parde!' quod I;
'Ne say noght so, for trewely,
Thogh ye had lost the ferses twelve,
And ye for sorwe mordred your-selve,
Ye sholde be dampned in this cas
By as good right as Medea was,
That slow hir children for Jason;
And Phyllis als for Demophon
Heng hir-self, so weylaway!
For he had broke his terme-day
To come to hir. Another rage
Had Dydo, quene eek of Cartage,
That slow hir-self, for Eneas
Was fals; a! whiche a fool she was!
And Ecquo dyed for Narcisus
Nolde nat love hir; and right thus
Hath many another foly don.
And for Dalida dyed Sampson,
That slow him-self with a pilere.
But there is noon a-lyve here
Wolde for a fers maken this wo!'
'Why so?' quod he; 'hit is nat so;
Thou wost ful litel what thou menest;
I have lost more than thou wenest.'
'Lo, sir, how may that be?' quod I;

'Good sir, tel me al hoolly
In what wyse, how, why, and wherfore
That ye have thus your blisse lore.'
'Blythly,' quod he, 'com sit adoun;
I telle thee up condicioun
That thou hoolly, with al thy wit,
Do thyn entent to herkene hit.'
'Yis, sir.' 'Swere thy trouthe ther-to.'
'Gladly.' 'Do than holde her-to!'
'I shal right blythly, so god me save,
Hoolly, with al the witte I have,
Here yow, as wel as I can.'
'A goddes half!' quod he, and began:—
'Sir,' quod he, 'sith first I couthe
Have any maner wit fro youthe,
Or kindely understonding
To comprehende, in any thing,
What love was, in myn owne wit,
Dredeles, I have ever yit
Be tributary, and yiven rente
To love hoolly with gode entente,
And through plesaunce become his thral,
With good wil, body, herte, and al.
Al this I putte in his servage,
As to my lorde, and dide homage;
And ful devoutly prayde him to,
He shulde besette myn herte so,
That it plesaunce to him were,
And worship to my lady dere.
'And this was longe, and many a yeer
Or that myn herte was set o-wher,
That I did thus, and niste why;
I trowe hit cam me kindely.
Paraunter I was therto able
As a whyt wal or a table;
For hit is redy to cacche and take
Al that men wil therin make,
Wher-so men wol portreye or peynte,
Be the werkes never so queynte.
'And thilke tyme I ferde so

I was able to have lerned tho,
And to have coud as wel or better,
Paraunter, other art or letter.
But for love cam first in my thought,
Therfore I forgat it nought.
I chees love to my firste craft,
Therfor hit is with me y-laft.
Forwhy I took hit of so yong age,
That malice hadde my corage
Nat that tyme turned to no-thing
Through to mochel knowleching.
For that tyme Youthe, my maistresse,
Governed me in ydelnesse;
For hit was in my firste youthe,
And tho ful litel good I couthe;
For al my werkes were flittinge,
And al my thoghtes varyinge;
Al were to me y-liche good,
That I knew tho; but thus hit stood.

'Hit happed that I cam a day
Into a place, ther I say,
Trewly, the fayrest companyë
Of ladies, that ever man with yë
Had seen togedres in oo place.
Shal I clepe hit hap other grace
That broghte me ther? nay, but Fortune,
That is to lyen ful comune,
The false trayteresse, pervers,
God wolde I coude clepe hir wers!
For now she worcheth me ful wo,
And I wol telle sone why so.

'Among thise ladies thus echoon,
Soth to seyn, I saw ther oon
That was lyk noon of al the route;
For I dar swere, withoute doute,
That as the someres sonne bright
Is fairer, clerer, and hath more light
Than any planete, is in heven,
The mone, or the sterres seven,
For al the worlde, so had she

Surmounted hem alle of beaute,
Of maner and of comlinesse,
Of stature and wel set gladnesse,
Of goodlihede so wel beseye—
Shortly, what shal I more seye?
By god, and by his halwes twelve,
It was my swete, right as hir-selve!
She had so stedfast countenaunce,
So noble port and meyntenaunce.
And Love, that had herd my bone,
Had espyed me thus sone,
That she ful sone, in my thoght,
As helpe me god, so was y-caught
So sodenly, that I ne took
No maner reed but at hir look
And at myn herte; for-why hir eyen
So gladly, I trow, myn herte seyen,
That purely tho myn owne thoght
Seyde hit were bet serve hir for noght
Than with another to be wel.
And hit was sooth, for, everydel,
I will anoon-right telle thee why.
'I saw hir daunce so comlily,
Carole and singe so swetely,
Laughe and pleye so womanly,
And loke so debonairly,
So goodly speke and so frendly,
That certes, I trow, that evermore
Nas seyn so blisful a tresore.
For every heer upon hir hede,
Soth to seyn, hit was not rede,
Ne nouther yelw, ne broun hit nas;
Me thoghte, most lyk gold hit was.
And whiche eyen my lady hadde!
Debonair, goode, glade, and sadde,
Simple, of good mochel, noght to wyde;
Therto hir look nas not a-syde,
Ne overthwert, but beset so wel,
Hit drew and took up, everydel,
Alle that on hir gan beholde.

Hir eyen semed anoon she wolde
Have mercy ; fooles wenden so ;
But hit was never the rather do.
Hit nas no countrefeted thing,
It was hir owne pure loking,
That the goddesse, dame Nature,
Had made hem opene by mesure,
And close ; for, were she never so glad,
Hir loking was not foly sprad,
Ne wildely, thogh that she pleyde ;
But ever, me thoghte, hir eyen seyde,
" By god, my wrathe is al for-yive ! "
'Therwith hir liste so wel to live,
That dulnesse was of hir a-drad.
She nas to sobre ne to glad ;
In alle thinges more mesure
Had never, I trowe, creature.
But many oon with hir loke she herte,
And that sat hir ful lyte at herte,
For she knew no-thing of hir thoght ;
But whether she knew, or knew hit noght,
Algate she ne roghte of hem a stree !
To gete hir love no ner nas he
That woned at home, than he in Inde ;
The formest was alway behinde.
But gode folk, over al other,
She loved as man may do his brother ;
Of whiche love she was wonder large,
In skilful places that bere charge.
'Which a visage had she ther-to !
Allas ! myn herte is wonder wo
That I ne can discryven hit !
Me lakketh bothe English and wit
For to undo hit at the fulle ;
And eek my spirits be so dulle
So greet a thing for to devyse.
I have no wit that can suffyse
To comprehenden hir beaute ;
But thus moche dar I seyn, that she
Was rody, fresh, and lyvely hewed ;

And every day hir beaute newed.
And negh hir face was alder-best;
For certes, Nature had swich lest
To make that fair, that trewly she
Was hir cheef patron of beautee,
And cheef ensample of al hir werke,
And moustre; for, be hit never so derke,
Me thinketh I see hir ever-mo.
And yet more-over, thogh alle tho
That ever lived were now a-lyve,
They ne sholde have founde to discryve
In al hir face a wikked signe;
For hit was sad, simple, and benigne.
'And which a goodly softe speche
Had that swete, my lyves leche!
So frendly, and so well y-grounded,
Up al resoun so wel y-founded,
And so tretable to alle gode,
That I dar swere by the rode,
Of eloquence was never founde
So swete a sowninge facounde,
Ne trewer tonged, ne scorned lasse,
Ne bet coude hele; that, by the masse
I durste swere, thogh the pope hit songe,
That ther was never through hir tonge
Man ne woman gretly harmed;
As for hir, ther was al harm hid;
Ne lasse flatering in hir worde,
That purely, hir simple recorde
Was founde as trewe as any bonde,
Or trouthe of any maunes honde.
Ne chyde she coude never a del,
That knoweth al the world ful wel.
'But swich a fairnesse of a nekke
Had that swete, that boon nor brekke
Nas ther non sene, that mis-sat.
Hit was whyt, smothe, streght, and flat,
Withouten hole; and canel-boon,
As by seming, had she noon.
Hir throte, as I have now memoire,

Semed a round tour of yvoire,
Of good gretnesse, and noght to grete.
'And gode faire WHYTE she hete,
That was my lady name right.
She was bothe fair and bright,
She hadde not hir name wrong.
Right faire shuldres, and body long
She hadde, and armes, every lith
Fattish, flesshy, not greet therwith;
Right whyte handes, and nayles rede,
Rounde brestes; and of good brede
Hir hippes were, a streight flat bak.
I knew on her non other lak
That al hir limmes nere sewing,
In as fer as I had knowing.
'Therto she coude so wel pleye,
Whan that her liste, that I dar seye,
That she was lyk to torche bright,
That every man may take of light
Ynogh, and hit hath never the lesse.
'Of maner and of comlinesse
Right so ferde my lady dere;
For every wight of hir manere
Might cacche ynogh, if that he wolde,
If he had eyen hir to beholde.
For I dar sweren, if that she
Had among ten thousand be,
She woldë have be, at the leste,
A cheef mirour of al the feste,
Thogh they had stonden in a rowe,
To mennes eyen that coude have knowe
For wher-so men had pleyd or waked,
Me thoghte the felawship as naked
Withouten hir, that saw I ones,
As a coroune withoute stones.
Trewely she was, to myn yë,
The soleyn fenix of Arabye,
For ther liveth never but oon;
Ne swich as she ne knew I noon.
'To speke of goodnesse; trewly she

Had as moche debonairte
As ever had Hester in the bible,
And more, if more were possible.
And, soth to seyne, therwith-al
She had a wit so general,
So hool enclyned to alle gode,
That al hir wit was set, by the rode,
Withoute malice, upon gladnesse;
Therto I saw never yet a lesse
Harmful, than she was in doing.
I sey nat that she ne had knowing
What was harm; or elles she
Had coud no good, so thinketh me.
'And trewly, for to speke of trouthe,
But she had had, hit had be routhe.
Therof she had so moche hir del—
And I dar seyn and swere hit wel—
That Trouthe him-self, over al and al,
Had chose his maner principal
In hir, that was his resting-place.
There-to she hadde the moste grace,
To have stedfast perseveraunce,
And esy, atempre governaunce,
That ever I knew or wiste yit;
So pure suffraunt was hir wit.
And reson gladly she understood,
Hit folowed wel she coude good.
She used gladly to do wel;
These were hir maners every-del.
'Therwith she loved so wel right,
She wrong do wolde to no wight;
No wight might do hir no shame,
She loved so wel hir owne name.
Hir luste to holde no wight in honde;
Ne, be thou siker, she nolde fonde
To holde no wight in balaunce,
By half word ne by countenaunce,
But-if men wolde upon hir lye;
Ne sende men in-to Walakye,
To Pruyse and in-to Tartarye,

To Alisaundre, ne in-to Turkye,
And bidde him faste, anoon that he
Go hoodles to the drye see,
And come hoom by the Carrenare;
And seye, "Sir, be now right ware
That I may of yow here seyn
Worship, or that ye come ageyn!"
She ne used no suche knakkes smale.
'But wherfor that I telle my tale?
Right on this same, as I have seyd,
Was hoolly al my love leyd;
For certes, she was, that swete wyf,
My suffisaunce, my lust, my lyf,
Myn hap, myn hele, and al my blisse,
My worldes welfare and my lisse,
And I hirs hoolly, everydel.'
'By our lord,' quod I, 'I trowe yow wel.
Hardely, your love was wel beset,
I not how ye mighte have do bet.'
'Bet? ne no wight so wel!' quod he.
'I trowe hit, sir,' quod I, 'parde!'
'Nay, leve hit wel!' 'Sir, so do I;
I leve yow wel, that trewely
Yow thoghte, that she was the beste,
And to beholde the alderfaireste,
Who so had loked with your eyen.'
'With myn? nay, alle that hir seyen
Seyde, and sworn hit was so.
And thogh they ne hadde, I wold tho
Have loved best my lady fre,
Thogh I had had al the beautee
That ever had Alcipyades,
And al the strengthe of Ercules,
And therto had the worthinesse
Of Alisaundre, and al the richesse
That ever was in Babiloyne,
In Cartage, or in Macedoyne,
Or in Rome, or in Ninive;
And therto al-so hardy be
As was Ector, so have I joye,

That Achilles slow at Troye—
And therfor was he slayn also
In a temple, for bothe two
Were slayn, he and Antilogus,
And so seyth Dares Frigius,
For love of hir Polixena—
Or been as wys as Minerva,
I wolde ever, withoute drede,
Have loved hir, for I moste nede!
"Nede!" nay, I gabbe now,
Noght "nede," and I wol telle how,
For of good wille myn herte hit wolde
And eek to love hir I was holde
As for the fairest and the beste.
'She was as good, so have I reste,
As ever was Penelope of Grece,
Or as the noble wyf Lucrece,
That was the beste—he telleth thus,
The Romain Tytus Livius—
She was as good, and no-thing lyke,
Thogh hir stories be autentyke;
Algate she was as trewe as she.
'But wherfor that I telle thee
Whan I first my lady sey?
I was right yong, the sooth to sey,
And ful gret need I hadde to lerne;
Whan my herte wolde yerne
To love, it was a greet empryse.
But as my wit coude best suffyse,
After my yonge childly wit,
Withoute drede, I besette hit
To love hir in my beste wyse,
To do hir worship and servyse
That I tho coude, by my trouthe,
Withoute feyning outher slouthe;
For wonder fayn I wolde hir see.
So mochel hit amended me,
That, whan I saw hir first a-morwe,
I was warished of al my sorwe
Of al day after, til hit were eve;

Me thoghte no-thing mighte me greve,
Were my sorwes never so smerte.
And yit she sit so in myn herte,
That, by my trouthe, I nolde noght,
For al this worlde, out of my thoght
Leve my lady; no, trewly!'
'Now, by my trouthe, sir,' quod I,
'Me thinketh ye have such a chaunce
As shrift withoute repentaunce.'
'Repentaunce! nay fy,' quod he;
'Shulde I now repente me
To love? nay, certes, than wer I wel
Wers than was Achitofel,
Or Anthenor, so have I joye,
The traytour that betraysed Troye,
Or the false Genelon,
He that purchased the treson
Of Rowland and of Olivere.
Nay, whyl I am a-lyve here
I nil foryete hir never-mo.'
'Now, gode sir,' quod I right tho,
'Ye han wel told me her-before.
It is no need reherse hit more
How ye sawe hir first, and where;
But wolde ye telle me the manere,
To hir which was your firste speche—
Therof I wolde yow be-seche—
And how she knewë first your thoght,
Whether ye loved hir or noght,
And telleth me eek what ye have lore;
I herde yow telle her-before.'
'Ye,' seyde he, 'thou nost what thou menest;
I have lost more than thou wenest.'
'What los is that, sir?' quod I tho;
'Nil she not love yow? is hit so?
Or have ye oght y-doon amis,
That she hath left yow? is hit this?
For goddes love, tel me al.'
'Before god,' quod he, 'and I shal.
I saye right as I have seyd,

On hir was al my love leyd ;
And yet she niste hit never a del
Noght longe tyme, leve hit wel.
For be right siker, I durste noght
For al this worlde telle hir my thoght,
Ne I wolde have wratthed hir, trewly.
For wostow why ? she was lady
Of the body ; she had the herte,
And who hath that, may not asterte.
'But, for to kepe me fro ydelnesse,
Trewly I did my besinesse
To make songes, as I best coude,
And ofte tyme I song hem loude ;
And made songes a gret del,
Al-thogh I coude not make so wel
Songes, ne knowe the art al,
As coude Lamekes sone Tubal,
That fond out first the art of songe ;
For, as his brothers hamers ronge
Upon his anvelt up and doun,
Therof he took the firste soun ;
But Grekes seyn, Pictagoras,
That he the firste finder was
Of the art ; Aurora telleth so,
But therof no fors, of hem two.
Algates songes thus I made
Of my feling, myn herte to glade ;
And lo ! this was the alther-firste,
I not wher that hit were the werste.—
"Lord, hit maketh myn herte light,
Whan I thenke on that swete wight
That is so semely on to see ;
And wisshe to god hit might so be,
That she wolde holde me for hir knight,
My lady, that is so fair and bright !"—
'Now have I told thee, sooth to saye,
My firste songe. Upon a daye
I bethoghte me what wo
And sorwe that I suffred tho
For hir, and yet she wiste hit noght,

Ne telle hir durste I nat my thoght.
"Allas!" thoghte I, "I can no reed;
And, but I telle hir, I nam but deed;
And if I telle hir, to seye sooth,
I am a-dred she wol be wrooth;
Allas! what shal I thanne do?"
'In this debat I was so wo,
Me thoghte myn herte braste a-tweyn!
So atte laste, soth to seyn,
I me bethoghte that nature
Ne formed never in creature
So moche beaute, trewely,
And bounte, withouten mercy.
'In hope of that, my tale I tolde
With sorwe, as that I never sholde,
For nedes; and, maugree my heed,
I moste have told hir or be deed.
I not wel how that I began,
Ful evel rehersen hit I can;
And eek, as helpe me god with-al,
I trowe hit was in the dismal,
That was the ten woundes of Egipte;
For many a word I over-skipte
In my tale, for pure fere
Lest my wordes mis-set were.
With sorweful herte, and woundes dede,
Softe and quaking for pure drede
And shame, and stinting in my tale
For ferde, and myn hewe al pale,
Ful ofte I wex bothe pale and reed;
Bowing to hir, I heng the heed;
I durst nat ones loke hir on,
For wit, manere, and al was gon.
I seyde "mercy!" and no more;
Hit nas no game, hit sat me sore.
'So atte laste, sooth to seyn,
Whan that myn herte was come ageyn,
To telle shortly al my speche,
With hool herte I gan hir beseche
That she wolde be my lady swete;

And swor, and gan hir hertely hete
Ever to be stedfast and trewe,
And love hir alwey freshly newe,
And never other lady have,
And al hir worship for to save
As I best coude ; I swor hir this—
" For youres is al that ever ther is
For evermore, myn herte swete !
And never false yow, but I mete,
I nil, as wis god helpe me so !"
'And whan I had my tale y-do,
God wot, she acounted nat a stree
Of al my tale, so thoghte me.
To telle shortly as hit is,
Trewly hir answere, hit was this ;
I can not now wel counterfete
Hir wordes, but this was the grete
Of hir answere ; she sayde, " nay "
Al-outerly. Allas ! that day
The sorwe I suffred, and the wo !
That trewly Cassandra, that so
Bewayled the destruccioun
Of Troye and of Ilioun,
Had never swich sorwe as I tho.
I durste no more say therto
For pure fere, but stal away ;
And thus I lived ful many a day :
That trewely, I hadde no need
Ferther than my beddes heed
Never a day to seche sorwe ;
I fond hit redy every morwe,
For-why I loved hir in no gere.
'So hit befel, another yere,
I thoughte ones I wolde fonde
To do hir knowe and understonde
My wo ; and she wel understood
That I ne wilned thing but good,
And worship, and to kepe hir name
Over al thing, and drede hir shame,
And was so besy hir to serve ;—

And pite were I shulde sterve,
Sith that I wilned noon harm, y-wis.
So whan my lady knew al this,
My lady yaf me al hoolly
The noble yift of hir mercy,
Saving hir worship, by al weyes;
Dredles, I mene noon other weyes.
And therwith she yaf me a ring;
I trowe hit was the firste thing;
But if myn herte was y-waxe
Glad, that is no need to axe!
As helpe me god, I was as blyve,
Reysed, as fro dethe to lyve,
Of alle happes the alder-beste,
The gladdest and the moste at reste.
For trewely, that swete wight,
Whan I had wrong and she the right,
So wolde alwey so goodely
For-yeve me so debonairly.
In alle my youthe, in alle chaunce,
She took me in hir governaunce,
'Therwith she was alway so trewe,
Our joye was ever y-liche newe;
Our hertes wern so even a payre,
That never nas that oon contrayre
To that other, for no wo.
For sothe, y-liche they suffred tho
Oo blisse and eek oo sorwe bothe;
Y-liche they were bothe gladde and wrothe.
Al was as oon, withoute were.
And thus we lived ful many a yere
So wel, I can nat telle how.'
'Sir,' quod I, 'wher is she now?
'Now!' quod he, and stinte anoon.
Therwith he wex as deed as stoon,
And seyde, 'allas! that I was bore!
That was the los, that her-before
I tolde thee, that I had lorn.
Bethenk how I seyde her-beforn,
"Thou wost ful litel what thou menest;

I have lost more than thou wenest"—
God wot, allas ! right that was she !'
'Allas ! sir, how ? what may that be ?'
'She is deed !' 'Nay !' 'Yis, by my trouthe !'
'Is that your los ? by god, hit is routhe !'
And with that worde, right anoon,
They gan to strake forth ; al was doon,
For that tyme, the hert-hunting.
With that, me thoghte, that this king
Gan quikly hoomward for to ryde
Unto a place ther besyde,
Which was from us but a lyte,
A long castel with walles whyte,
By seynt Johan ! on a riche hil,
As me mette ; but thus it fil.
Right thus me mette, as I yow telle,
That in the castel was a belle,
As hit had smiten houres twelve.—

Therwith I awook my-selve,
And fond me lying in my bed ;
And the book that I had red,
Of Alcyone and Seys the king,
And of the goddes of sleping,
I fond it in myn honde ful even.
Thoghte I, 'this is so queynt a sweven,
That I wol, by processe of tyme,
Fonde to putte this sweven in ryme
As I can best ; and that anoon.'—
This was my sweven ; now hit is doon.

Explicit the Boke of the Duchesse.

IV. THE COMPLEYNT OF MARS

The Proem

'Gladeth, ye foules, of the morow gray,
Lo! Venus risen among yon rowes rede!
And floures fresshe, honoureth ye this day;
For when the sonne uprist, then wol ye sprede.
But ye lovers, that lye in any drede,
Fleëth, lest wikked tonges yow espye;
Lo! yond the sonne, the candel of jelosye!

With teres blewe, and with a wounded herte
Taketh your leve; and, with seynt John to borow,
Apeseth somwhat of your sorowes smerte,
Tyme cometh eft, that cese shal your sorow;
The glade night is worth an hevy morow!'—
(Seynt Valentyne! a foul thus herde I singe
Upon thy day, er sonne gan up-springe).—

Yet sang this foul—'I rede yow al a-wake,
And ye, that han not chosen in humble wyse,
Without repenting cheseth yow your make.
And ye, that han ful chosen as I devyse,
Yet at the leste renoveleth your servyse;
Confermeth it perpetuely to dure,
And paciently taketh your aventure.

And for the worship of this hye feste,
Yet wol I, in my briddes wyse, singe
The sentence of the compleynt, at the leste,
That woful Mars made atte departinge
Fro fresshe Venus in a morweninge,

Whan Phebus, with his fyry torches rede,
Ransaked every lover in his drede.

The Story

Whylom the thridde hevenes lord above,
As wel by hevenish revolucioun
As by desert, hath wonne Venus his love,
And she hath take him in subjeccioun,
And as a maistresse taught him his lessoun,
Comaunding him that never, in hir servyse,
He nere so bold no lover to despyse.

For she forbad him jelosye at alle,
And cruelte, and bost, and tirannye;
She made him at hir lust so humble and talle,
That when hir deyned caste on him hir yë,
He took in pacience to live or dye;
And thus she brydeleth him in hir manere,
With no-thing but with scourging of hir chere.

Who regneth now in blisse but Venus,
That hath this worthy knight in governaunce?
Who singeth now but Mars, that serveth thus
The faire Venus, causer of plesaunce?
He bynt him to perpetual obeisaunce,
And she bynt hir to loven him for ever,
But so be that his trespas hit dissever.

Thus be they knit, and regnen as in heven
By loking most; til hit fil, on a tyde,
That by hir bothe assent was set a steven,
That Mars shall entre, as faste as he may glyde,
Into hir nexte paleys, to abyde,
Walking his cours til she had him a-take,
And he preyde hir to haste hir for his sake.

Then seyde he thus—"myn hertes lady swete,
Ye knowe wel my mischef in that place;
For sikerly, til that I with yow mete,

My lyf stant ther in aventure and grace ;
But when I see the beaute of your face,
Ther is no dreed of deeth may do me smerte,
For al your lust is ese to myn herte."

She hath so gret compassion of hir knight,
That dwelleth in solitude til she come ;
For hit stood so, that ilke tyme, no wight
Counseyled him, ne seyde to him welcome,
That nigh hir wit for wo was overcome ;
Wherfore she spedde hir as faste in hir weye,
Almost in oon day, as he dide in tweye.

The grete joye that was betwix hem two,
Whan they be met, ther may no tunge telle,
Ther is no more, but unto bed they go,
And thus in joye and blisse I lete hem dwelle ;
This worthy Mars, that is of knighthod welle,
The flour of fairnes lappeth in his armes,
And Venus kisseth Mars, the god of armes.

Sojourned hath this Mars, of which I rede,
In chambre amid the paleys prively
A certeyn tyme, til him fel a drede,
Through Phebus, that was comen hastely
Within the paleys-yates sturdely,
With torche in honde, of which the stremes brighte
On Venus chambre knokkeden ful lighte.

The chambre, ther as lay this fresshe quene,
Depeynted was with whyte boles grete,
And by the light she knew, that shoon so shene,
That Phebus cam to brenne hem with his hete ;
This sely Venus, dreynt in teres wete,
Enbraceth Mars, and seyde, "alas ! I dye !
The torch is come, that al this world wol wrye."

Up sterte Mars, him liste not to slepe,
Whan he his lady herde so compleyne ;
But, for his nature was not for to wepe,
In stede of teres, fro his eyen tweyne
The fyry sparke brosten out for peyne ;

And hente his hauberk, that lay him besyde;
Flee wolde he not, ne mighte him-selven hyde.

He throweth on his helm of huge wighte,
And girt him with his swerde; and in his honde
His mighty spere, as he was wont to fighte,
He shaketh so that almost it to-wonde;
Ful hevy he was to walken over londe;
He may not holde with Venus companye,
But bad hir fleen, lest Phebus hir espye.

O woful Mars! alas! what mayst thou seyn,
That in the paleys of thy disturbaunce
Art left behinde, in peril to be sleyn?
And yet ther-to is double thy penaunce,
For she, that hath thyn herte in governaunce,
Is passed halfe the stremes of thyn yën;
That thou nere swift, wel mayst thou wepe and cryen.

Now fleeth Venus un-to Cylenius tour,
With voide cours, for fere of Phebus light.
Alas! and ther ne hath she no socour,
For she ne fond ne saw no maner wight;
And eek as ther she had but litil might;
Wher-for, hir-selven for to hyde and save,
Within the gate she fledde into a cave.

Derk was this cave, and smoking as the helle,
Not but two pas within the gate hit stood;
A naturel day in derk I lete hir dwelle.
Now wol I speke of Mars, furious and wood;
For sorow he wolde have seen his herte blood;
Sith that he mighte hir don no companye,
He ne roghte not a myte for to dye.

So feble he wex, for hete and for his wo,
That nigh he swelt, he mighte unnethe endure;
He passeth but oo steyre in dayes two,
But ner the les, for al his hevy armure,
He foloweth hir that is his lyves cure;

For whos departing he took gretter yre
Thanne for al his brenning in the fyre.

After he walketh softely a pas,
Compleyning, that hit pite was to here.
He seyde, "O lady bright, Venus ! alas !
That ever so wyde a compas is my spere !
Alas ! whan shal I mete yow, herte dere,
This twelfte day of April I endure,
Through jelous Phebus, this misaventure."

Now helpe god sely Venus allone !
But, as god wolde, hit happed for to be,
That, whyl that Venus weping made hir mone,
Cylenius, ryding in his chevauchè,
Fro Venus valance mighte his paleys see,
And Venus he salueth, and maketh chere,
And hir receyveth as his frend ful dere.

Mars dwelleth forth in his adversitee,
Compleyning ever on hir departinge ;
And what his compleynt was, remembreth me ;
And therfore, in this lusty morweninge,
As I best can, I wol hit seyn and singe,
And after that I wol my leve take ;
And god yeve every wight joye of his make !

The Compleynt of Mars

The Proem of the Compleynt

The ordre of compleynt requireth skilfully,
That if a wight shal pleyne pitously,
  Ther mot be cause wherfor that men pleyne ;
Or men may deme he pleyneth folily
And causeles ; alas ! that am not I!
  Wherfor the ground and cause of al my peyne,
  So as my troubled wit may hit ateyne,
I wol reherse ; not for to have redresse,
But to declare my ground of hevinesse.

Devotion

The firste tyme, alas! that I was wroght,
And for certeyn effectes hider broght
By him that lordeth ech intelligence,
I yaf my trewe servise and my thoght,
For evermore—how dere I have hit boght!—
To hir, that is of so gret excellence,
That what wight that first sheweth his presence,
When she is wroth and taketh of him no cure,
He may not longe in joye of love endure.

This is no feyned mater that I telle;
My lady is the verrey sours and welle
Of beaute, lust, fredom, and gentilnesse,
Of riche aray—how dere men hit selle!—
Of al disport in which men frendly dwelle,
Of love and pley, and of benigne humblesse,
Of soune of instruments of al swetnesse;
And therto so wel fortuned and thewed,
That through the world hir goodnesse is y-shewed.

What wonder is then, thogh that I besette
My servise on suche oon, that may me knette
To wele or wo, sith hit lyth in hir might?
Therfor my herte for ever I to hir hette;
Ne trewly, for my dethe, I shal not lette
To ben hir trewest servaunt and hir knight.
I flater noght, that may wite every wight;
For this day in hir servise shal I dye;
But grace be, I see hir never with yë.

A Lady in fear and woe

To whom shal I than pleyne of my distresse?
Who may me helpe, who may my harm redresse?
Shal I compleyne unto my lady free?
Nay, certes! for she hath such hevinesse,
For fere and eek for wo, that, as I gesse,
In litil tyme hit wol hir bane be.
But were she sauf, hit wer no fors of me.

Alas! that ever lovers mote endure,
For love, so many a perilous aventure!

For thogh so be that lovers be as trewe
As any metal that is forged newe,
In many a cas hem tydeth ofte sorowe.
Somtyme hir ladies will not on hem rewe,
Somtyme, yif that jelosye hit knewe,
They mighten lightly leye hir heed to borowe;
Somtyme envyous folke with tunges horowe
Depraven hem; alas! whom may they plese?
But he be fals, no lover hath his ese.

But what availeth suche a long sermoun
Of aventures of lovë, up and doun?
I wol returne and speken of my peyne;
The point is this of my destruccioun,
My righte lady, my salvacioun,
Is in affray, and not to whom to pleyne.
O herte swete, O lady sovereyne!
For your disese, wel oghte I swoune and swelte,
Thogh I non other harm ne drede felte.

Instability of Happiness

To what fyn made the god that sit so hye,
Benethen him, love other companye,
And streyneth folk to love, malgre hir hede?
And then hir joye, for oght I can espye,
Ne lasteth not the twinkeling of an yë,
And somme han never joye til they be dede.
What meneth this? what is this mistihede?
Wherto constreyneth he his folk so faste
Thing to desyre, but hit shulde laste?

And thogh he made a lover love a thing,
And maketh hit seme stedfast and during,
Yet putteth he in hit such misaventure,
That reste nis ther noon in his yeving.
And that is wonder, that so just a king

Doth such hardnesse to his creature.
Thus, whether love breke or elles dure,
Algates he that hath with love to done
Hath ofter wo then changed is the mone.

Hit semeth he hath to lovers enmite,
And lyk a fissher, as men alday may see,
Baiteth his angle-hook with som plesaunce,
Til mony a fish is wood til that he be
Sesed ther-with; and then at erst hath he
Al his desyr, and ther-with al mischaunce;
And thogh the lyne breke, he hath penaunce;
For with the hoke he wounded is so sore,
That he his wages hath for ever-more.

The Brooch of Thebes

The broche of Thebes was of suche a kinde,
So ful of rubies and of stones Inde,
That every wight, that sette on hit an yë,
He wende anon to worthe out of his minde;
So sore the beaute wolde his herte binde,
Til he hit hadde, him thoghte he moste dye;
And whan that hit was his, than shulde he drye
Such wo for drede, ay whyl that he hit hadde,
That welnigh for the fere he shulde madde.

And whan hit was fro his possessioun,
Than had he double wo and passioun
For he so fair a tresor had forgo;
But yet this broche, as in conclusioun,
Was not the cause of this confusioun;
But he that wroghte hit enfortuned hit so,
That every wight that had hit shuld have wo;
And therfor in the worcher was the vyce,
And in the covetour that was so nyce.

So fareth hit by lovers and by me;
For thogh my lady have so gret beautè,
That I was mad til I had gete hir grace,

She was not cause of myn adversitee,
But he that wroghte hir, also mot I thee,
That putte suche a beaute in hir face,
That made me to covete and purchace
Myn owne deth; him wyte I that I dye,
And myn unwit, that ever I clomb so hye.

An Appeal for Sympathy

But to yow, hardy knightes of renoun,
Sin that ye be of my divisioun,
Al be I not worthy so grete a name,
Yet, seyn these clerkes, I am your patroun;
Ther-for ye oghte have som compassioun
Of my disese, and take it noght a-game.
The proudest of yow may be mad ful tame;
Wherfor I prey yow, of your gentilesse,
That ye compleyne for myn hevinesse.

And ye, my ladies, that ben trewe and stable,
By way of kinde, ye oghten to be able
To have pite of folk that be in peyne:
Now have ye cause to clothe yow in sable;
Sith that your emperice, the honorable,
Is desolat, wel oghte ye to pleyne;
Now shuld your holy teres falle and reyne.
Alas! your honour and your emperice,
Nigh deed for drede, ne can hir not chevise.

Compleyneth eek, ye lovers, al in-fere,
For hir that, with unfeyned humble chere,
Was ever redy to do yow socour;
Compleyneth hir that ever hath had yow dere;
Compleyneth beaute, fredom, and manere;
Compleyneth hir that endeth your labour;
Compleyneth thilke ensample of al honour,
That never dide but al gentilesse;
Kytheth therfor on hir som kindenesse.'

V. THE PARLEMENT OF FOULES

The Proem

The lyf so short, the craft so long to lerne,
Th'assay so hard, so sharp the conquering,
The dredful joye, that alwey slit so yerne,
Al this mene I by love, that my feling
Astonyeth with his wonderful worching
So sore y-wis, that whan I on him thinke,
Nat wot I wel wher that I wake or winke.

For al be that I knowe not love in dede,
Ne wot how that he quyteth folk hir hyre,
Yet happeth me ful ofte in bokes rede
Of his miracles, and his cruel yre;
Ther rede I wel he wol be lord and syre,
I dar not seyn, his strokes been so sore,
But god save swich a lord! I can no more.

Of usage, what for luste what for lore,
On bokes rede I ofte, as I yow·tolde.
But wherfor that I speke al this? not yore
Agon, hit happed me for to beholde
Upon a boke, was write with lettres olde;
And ther-upon, a certeyn thing to lerne,
The longe day ful faste I radde and yerne.

For out of olde feldes, as men seith,
Cometh al this newe corn fro yeer to yere;
And out of olde bokes, in good feith,
Cometh al this newe science that men lere.
But now to purpos as of this matere—
To rede forth hit gan me so delyte,
That al the day me thoughte but a lyte.

This book of which I make mencioun,
Entitled was al thus, as I shal telle,
'Tullius of the dreme of Scipioun';
Chapitres seven hit hadde, of hevene and helle,
And erthe, and soules that therinne dwelle,
Of whiche, as shortly as I can hit trete,
Of his sentence I wol you seyn the grete.

First telleth hit, whan Scipioun was come
In Afrik, how he mette Massinisse,
That him for joye in armes hath y-nome.
Than telleth hit hir speche and al the blisse
That was betwix hem, til the day gan misse;
And how his auncestre, African so dere,
Gan in his slepe that night to him appere.

Than telleth hit that, fro a sterry place,
How African hath him Cartage shewed,
And warned him before of al his grace,
And seyde him, what man, lered other lewed,
That loveth comun profit, wel y-thewed,
He shal unto a blisful place wende,
Ther as joye is that last withouten ende.

Than asked he, if folk that heer be dede
Have lyf and dwelling in another place;
And African seyde, 'ye, withoute drede,'
And that our present worldes lyves space
Nis but a maner deth, what wey we trace,
And rightful folk shal go, after they dye,
To heven; and shewed him the galaxye.

Than shewed he him the litel erthe, that heer is,
At regard of the hevenes quantite;
And after shewed he him the nyne speres,
And after that the melodye herde he
That cometh of thilke speres thryes three,
That welle is of musyke and melodye
In this world heer, and cause of armonye.

Than bad he him, sin erthe was so lyte,
And ful of torment and of harde grace,
That he ne shulde him in the world delyte.
Than tolde he him, in certeyn yeres space,
That every sterre shulde come into his place
Ther hit was first; and al shulde out of minde
That in this worlde is don of al mankinde.

Than prayde him Scipioun to telle him al
The wey to come un-to that hevene blisse;
And he seyde, 'know thy-self first immortal,
And loke ay besily thou werke and wisse
To comun profit, and thou shalt nat misse
To comen swiftly to that place dere,
That ful of blisse is and of soules clere.

But brekers of the lawe, soth to seyne,
And lecherous folk, after that they be dede,
Shul alwey whirle aboute th'erthe in peyne,
Til many a world be passed, out of drede,
And than, for-yeven alle hir wikked dede,
Than shul they come unto that blisful place,
To which to comen god thee sende his grace!'—

The day gan failen, and the derke night,
That reveth bestes from hir besinesse,
Berafte me my book for lakke of light,
And to my bedde I gan me for to dresse,
Fulfild of thought and besy hevinesse;
For bothe I hadde thing which that I nolde,
And eek I ne hadde that thing that I wolde.

But fynally my spirit, at the laste,
For-wery of my labour al the day,
Took rest, that made me to slepe faste,
And in my slepe I mette, as I lay,
How African, right in that selfe aray
That Scipioun him saw before that tyde,
Was comen, and stood right at my beddes syde.

The wery hunter, slepinge in his bed,
To wode ayein his minde goth anoon;
The juge dremeth how his plees ben sped;
The carter dremeth how his cartes goon;
The riche, of gold; the knight fight with his foon,
The seke met he drinketh of the tonne;
The lover met he hath his lady wonne.

Can I nat seyn if that the cause were
For I had red of African beforn,
That made me to mete that he stood there;
But thus seyde he, 'thou hast thee so wel born
In loking of myn olde book to-torn,
Of which Macrobie roghte nat a lyte,
That somdel of thy labour wolde I quyte!'—

Citherea! thou blisful lady swete,
That with thy fyr-brand dauntest whom thee lest,
And madest me this sweven for to mete,
Be thou my help in this, for thou mayst best;
As wisly as I saw thee north-north-west,
When I began my sweven for to wryte,
So yif me might to ryme hit and endyte!

The Story

This forseid African me hente anoon,
And forth with him unto a gate broghte
Right of a parke, walled with grene stoon;
And over the gate, with lettres large y-wroghte,
Ther weren vers y-writen, as me thoghte,
On eyther halfe, of ful gret difference,
Of which I shal yow sey the pleyn sentence.

'Thorgh me men goon in-to that blisful place
Of hertes hele and dedly woundes cure;
Thorgh me men goon unto the welle of Grace,
Ther grene and lusty May shal ever endure;
This is the wey to al good aventure;
Be glad, thou reder, and thy sorwe of-caste,
Al open am I; passe in, and hy the faste!'

'Thorgh me men goon,' than spak that other syde,
'Unto the mortal strokes of the spere,
Of which Disdayn and Daunger is the gyde,
Ther tree shal never fruit ne leves bere.
This streem you ledeth to the sorwful were,
Ther as the fish in prison is al drye;
Th'eschewing is only the remedye.'

Thise vers of gold and blak y-writen were,
The whiche I gan a stounde to beholde,
For with that oon encresed ay my fere,
And with that other gan myn herte bolde;
That oon me hette, that other did me colde,
No wit had I, for errour, for to chese,
To entre or flee, or me to save or lese.

Right as, betwixen adamauntes two
Of even might, a pece of iren y-set,
That hath no might to meve to ne fro—
For what that on may hale, that other let—
Ferde I, that niste whether me was bet,
To entre or leve, til African my gyde
Me hente, and shoof in at the gates wyde,

And seyde, 'hit stondeth writen in thy face,
Thyn errour, though thou telle it not to me;
But dred thee nat to come in-to this place,
For this wryting is no-thing ment by thee,
Ne by noon, but he Loves servant be;
For thou of love hast lost thy tast, I gesse,
As seek man hath of swete and bitternesse.

But natheles, al-though that thou be dulle,
Yit that thou canst not do, yit mayst thou see;
For many a man that may not stonde a pulle,
Yit lyketh him at the wrastling for to be,
And demeth yit wher he do bet or he;
And if thou haddest cunning for t'endyte,
I shal thee shewen mater of to wryte.'

With that my hond in his he took anoon,
Of which I comfort caughte, and wente in faste;
But lord! so I was glad and wel begoon!
For over-al, wher that I myn eyen caste,
Were treës clad with leves that ay shal laste,
Eche in his kinde, of colour fresh and grene
As emeraude, that joye was to sene.

The bilder ook, and eek the hardy asshe;
The piler elm, the cofre unto careyne;
The boxtree piper; holm to whippes lasshe;
The sayling firr; the cipres, deth to pleyne;
The sheter ew, the asp for shaftes pleyne;
The olyve of pees, and eek the drunken vyne,
The victor palm, the laurer to devyne.

A garden saw I, ful of blosmy bowes,
Upon a river, in a grene mede,
Ther as that swetnesse evermore y-now is,
With floures whyte, blewe, yelowe, and rede;
And colde welle-stremes, no-thing dede,
That swommen ful of smale fisshes lighte,
With finnes rede and scales silver-brighte.

On every bough the briddes herde I singe,
With voys of aungel in hir armonye,
Som besyed hem hir briddes forth to bringe;
The litel conyes to hir pley gunne hye,
And further al aboute I gan espye
The dredful roo, the buk, the hert and hinde,
Squerels, and bestes smale of gentil kinde.

Of instruments of strenges in acord
Herde I so pleye a ravisshing swetnesse,
That god, that maker is of al and lord,
Ne herde never better, as I gesse;
Therwith a wind, unnethe hit might be lesse,
Made in the leves grene a noise softe
Acordant to the foules songe on-lofte.

The air of that place so attempre was
That never was grevaunce of hoot ne cold ;
Ther wex eek every holsom spyce and gras,
Ne no man may ther wexe seek ne old ;
Yet was ther joye more a thousand fold
Then man can telle ; ne never wolde it nighte,
But ay cleer day to any mannes sighte.

Under a tree, besyde a welle, I say
Cupyde our lord his arwes forge and fyle ;
And at his fete his bowe al redy lay,
And wel his doghter tempred al the whyle
The hedes in the welle, and with hir wyle
She couched hem after as they shulde serve,
Som for to slee, and som to wounde and kerve.

Tho was I war of Plesaunce anon-right,
And of Aray, and Lust, and Curtesye ;
And of the Craft that can and hath the might
To doon by force a wight to do folye—
Disfigurat was she, I nil not lye ;
And by him-self, under an oke, I gesse,
Sawe I Delyt, that stood with Gentilnesse.

I saw Beautee, withouten any atyr,
And Youthe, ful of game and Iolyte,
Fool-hardinesse, Flatery, and Desyr,
Messagerye, and Mede, and other three—
Hir names shul noght here be told for me—
And upon pilers grete of jasper longe
I saw a temple of bras y-founded stronge.

Aboute the temple daunceden alway
Wommen y-nowe, of whiche somme ther were
Faire of hem-self, and somme of hem were gay ;
In kirtels, al disshevele, wente they there—
That was hir office alwey, yeer by yere—
And on the temple, of doves whyte and faire
Saw I sittinge many a hundred paire.

Before the temple-dore ful soberly
Dame Pees sat, with a curteyn in hir hond:
And hir besyde, wonder discretly,
Dame Pacience sitting ther I fond
With face pale, upon an hille of sond;
And alder-next, within and eek withoute,
Behest and Art, and of hir folke a route.

Within the temple, of syghes hote as fyr
I herde a swogh that gan aboute renne;
Which syghes were engendred with desyr,
That maden every auter for to brenne
Of newe flaume; and wel aspyed I thenne
That al the cause of sorwes that they drye
Com of the bitter goddesse Jalousye.

The god Priapus saw I, as I wente,
Within the temple, in soverayn place stonde,
In swich aray as whan the asse him shente
With crye by night, and with his ceptre in honde;
Ful besily men gunne assaye and fonde
Upon his hede to sette, of sondry hewe,
Garlondes ful of fresshe floures newe.

And in a privee corner, in disporte,
Fond I Venus and hir porter Richesse,
That was ful noble and hauteyn of hir porte;
Derk was that place, but afterward lightnesse
I saw a lyte, unnethe hit might be lesse,
And on a bed of golde she lay to reste,
Til that the hote sonne gan to weste.

Her gilte heres with a golden threde
Y-bounden were, untressed as she lay,
And naked fro the breste unto the hede
Men might hir see; and, sothly for to say,
The remenant wel kevered to my pay
Right with a subtil kerchef of Valence,
There was no thikker cloth of no defence.

The place yaf a thousand savours swote,
And Bachus, god of wyn, sat hir besyde,
And Ceres next, that doth of hunger bote;
And, as I seide, amiddes lay Cipryde,
To whom on knees two yonge folkes cryde
To ben hir help; but thus I leet hir lye,
And ferther in the temple I gan espye

That, in dispyte of Diane the chaste,
Ful many a bowe y-broke heng on the wal
Of maydens, suche as gunne hir tymes waste
In hir servyse; and peynted over al
Of many a story, of which I touche shal
A fewe, as of Calixte and Athalaunte,
And many a mayde, of which the name I wante;

Semyramus, Candace, and Ercules,
Biblis, Dido, Tisbe and Piramus,
Tristram, Isoude, Paris, and Achilles,
Eleyne, Cleopatre, and Troilus,
Silla, and eek the moder of Romulus—
Alle these were peynted on that other syde,
And al hir love, and in what plyte they dyde.

Whan I was come ayen into the place
That I of spak, that was so swote and grene,
Forth welk I tho, my-selven to solace.
Tho was I war wher that ther sat a quene
That, as of light the somer-sonne shene
Passeth the sterre, right so over mesure
She fairer was than any creature.

And in a launde, upon an hille of floures,
Was set this noble goddesse Nature;
Of braunches were hir halles and hir boures,
Y-wrought after hir craft and hir mesure;
Ne ther nas foul that cometh of engendrure,
That they ne were prest in hir presence,
To take hir doom and yeve hir audience.

For this was on seynt Valentynes day,
Whan every foul cometh ther to chese his make,
Of every kinde, that men thenke may ;
And that so huge a noyse gan they make,
That erthe and see, and tree, and every lake
So ful was, that unnethe was ther space
For me to stonde, so ful was al the place.

And right as Aleyn, in the Pleynt of Kinde,
Devyseth Nature of aray and face,
In swich aray men mighten hir ther finde.
This noble emperesse, ful of grace,
Bad every foul to take his owne place,
As they were wont alwey fro yeer to yere,
Seynt Valentynes day, to stonden there.

That is to sey, the foules of ravyne
Were hyest set ; and than the foules smale,
That eten as hem nature wolde enclyne,
As worm, or thing of whiche I telle no tale ;
But water-foul sat lowest in the dale ;
And foul that liveth by seed sat on the grene,
And that so fele, that wonder was to sene.

Ther mighte men the royal egle finde,
That with his sharpe look perceth the sonne ;
And other egles of a lower kinde,
Of which that clerkes wel devysen conne.
Ther was the tyraunt with his fethres donne
And greye, I mene the goshauk, that doth pyne
To briddes for his outrageous ravyne.

The gentil faucon, that with his feet distreyneth
The kinges hond ; the hardy sperhauk eke,
The quayles foo ; the merlion that peyneth
Him-self ful ofte, the larke for to seke ;
Ther was the douve, with hir eyen meke ;
The jalous swan, ayens his deth that singeth ;
The oule eek, that of dethe the bode bringeth ;

The crane the geaunt, with his trompes soune ;
The theef, the chogh ; and eek the jangling pye ;
The scorning jay ; the eles foo, the heroune ;
The false lapwing, ful of trecherye ;
The stare, that the counseyl can bewrye ;
The tame ruddok ; and the coward kyte ;
The cok, that orloge is of thorpes lyte ;

The sparow, Venus sone ; the nightingale,
That clepeth forth the fresshe leves newe ;
The swalow, mordrer of the flyës smale
That maken hony of floures fresshe of hewe ;
The wedded turtel, with hir herte trewe ;
The pecok, with his aungels fethres brighte ;
The fesaunt, scorner of the cok by nighte ;

The waker goos ; the cukkow ever unkinde ;
The popinjay, ful of delicasye ;
The drake, stroyer of his owne kinde ;
The stork, the wreker of avouterye ;
The hote cormeraunt of glotonye ;
The raven wys, the crow with vois of care ;
The throstel olde ; the frosty feldefare.

What shulde I seyn? of foules every kinde
That in this worlde han fethres and stature,
Men mighten in that place assembled finde
Before the noble goddesse Nature.
And everich of hem did his besy cure
Benignely to chese or for to take,
By hir acord, his formel or his make.

But to the poynt—Nature held on hir honde
A formel egle, of shap the gentileste
That ever she among hir werkes fonde,
The most benigne and the goodlieste ;
In hir was every vertu at his reste,
So ferforth, that Nature hir-self had blisse
To loke on hir, and ofte hir bek to kisse.

Nature, the vicaire of th'almyghty lorde,
That hoot, cold, hevy, light, and moist and dreye
Hath knit by even noumbre of acorde,
In esy vois began to speke and seye,
'Foules, tak hede of my sentence, I preye,
And, for your ese, in furthering of your nede,
As faste as I may speke, I wol me spede.

Ye know wel how, seynt Valentynes day,
By my statut and through my governaunce,
Ye come for to chese—and flee your way—
Your makes, as I prik yow with plesaunce.
But natheles, my rightful ordenaunce
May I not lete, for al this world to winne,
That he that most is worthy shal beginne.

The tercel egle, as that ye knowen wel,
The foul royal above yow in degree,
The wyse and worthy, secree, trewe as stel,
The which I formed have, as ye may see,
In every part as hit best lyketh me,
Hit nedeth noght his shap yow to devyse,
He shal first chese and speken in his gyse.

And after him, by order shul ye chese,
After your kinde, everich as yow lyketh,
And, as your hap is, shul ye winne or lese;
But which of yow that love most entryketh,
God sende him hir that sorest for him syketh.'
And therwith-al the tercel gan she calle,
And seyde, 'my sone, the choys is to thee falle.

But natheles, in this condicioun
Mot be the choys of everich that is here,
That she agree to his eleccioun,
Who-so he be that shulde been hir fere;
This is our usage alwey, fro yeer to yere;
And who so may at this time have his grace,
In blisful tyme he com in-to this place.'

With hed enclyned and with ful humble chere
This royal tercel spak and taried nought;
'Unto my sovereyn lady, and noght my fere,
I chese, and chese with wille and herte and thought,
The formel on your hond so wel y-wrought,
Whos I am al and ever wol hir serve,
Do what hir list, to do me live or sterve.

Beseching hir of mercy and of grace,
As she that is my lady sovereyne;
Or let me dye present in this place.
For certes, long may I not live in peyne;
For in myn herte is corven every veyne;
Having reward al only to my trouthe,
My dere herte, have on my wo som routhe.

And if that I to hir be founde untrewe,
Disobeysaunt, or wilful negligent,
Avauntour, or in proces love a newe,
I pray to you this be my jugement,
That with these foules I be al to-rent,
That ilke day that ever she me finde
To hir untrewe, or in my gilte unkinde.

And sin that noon loveth hir so wel as I,
Al be she never of love me behette,
Than oghte she be myn thourgh hir mercy,
For other bond can I noon on hir knette.
For never, for no wo, ne shal I lette
To serven hir, how fer so that she wende;
Sey what yow list, my tale is at an ende.'

Right as the fresshe, rede rose newe
Ayen the somer-sonne coloured is,
Right so for shame al wexen gan the hewe
Of this formel, whan she herde al this;
She neyther answerde 'wel,' ne seyde amis.
So sore abasshed was she, til that Nature
Seyde, 'doghter, drede yow noght, I yow assure.'

Another tercel egle spak anoon
Of lower kinde, and seyde, 'that shal not be;
I love hir bet than ye do, by seynt John,
Or at leste I love hir as wel as ye;
And lenger have served hir, in my degree,
And if she shulde have loved for long loving,
To me allone had been the guerdoning.

I dar eek seye, if she me finde fals,
Unkinde, jangler, or rebel any wyse,
Or jalous, do me hongen by the hals!
And but I bere me in hir servyse
As wel as that my wit can me suffyse,
Fro poynt to poynt, hir honour for to save,
Tak she my lyf, and al the good I have.'

The thridde tercel egle answerde tho,
'Now, sirs, ye seen the litel leyser here;
For every foul cryeth out to been a-go
Forth with his make, or with his lady dere;
And eek Nature hir-self ne wol nought here,
For tarying here, noght half that I wolde seye;
And but I speke, I mot for sorwe deye.

Of long servyse avaunte I me no-thing,
But as possible is me to dye to-day
For wo, as he that hath ben languisshing
Thise twenty winter, and wel happen may
A man may serven bet and more to pay
In half a yere, al-though hit were no more,
Than som man doth that hath served ful yore.

I ne say not this by me, for I ne can
Do no servyse that may my lady plese;
But I dar seyn, I am hir trewest man
As to my dome, and feynest wolde hir ese;
At shorte wordes, til that deth me sese,
I wol ben hires, whether I wake or winke,
And trewe in al that herte may bethinke.'

Of al my lyf, sin that day I was born,
So gentil plee in love or other thing
Ne herde never no man me beforn,
Who-so that hadde leyser and cunning
For to reherse hir chere and hir speking;
And from the morwe gan this speche laste
Til dounward drow the sonne wonder faste.

The noyse of foules for to ben delivered
So loude rong, 'have doon and let us wende!'
That wel wende I the wode had al to-shivered.
'Come of!' they cryde, 'allas! ye wil us shende!
Whan shal your cursed pleding have an ende?
How shulde a juge eyther party leve,
For yee or nay, with-outen any preve?'

The goos, the cokkow, and the doke also
So cryden 'kek, kek!' 'kukkow!' 'quek, quek!' hye,
That thorgh myn eres the noyse wente tho.
The goos seyde, 'al this nis not worth a flye!
But I can shape hereof a remedye,
And I wol sey my verdit faire and swythe
For water-foul, who-so be wrooth or blythe.'

'And I for worm-foul,' seyde the fool cukkow,
'For I wol, of myn owne auctoritè,
For comune spede, take the charge now,
For to delivere us is gret charitè.'
'Ye may abyde a whyle yet, parde!'
Seide the turtel, 'if hit be your wille
A wight may speke, him were as good be stille.

I am a seed-foul, oon the unworthieste,
That wot I wel, and litel of kunninge;
But bet is that a wightes tonge reste
Than entremeten him of such doinge
Of which he neyther rede can nor singe.
And who-so doth, ful foule himself acloyeth,
For office uncommitted ofte anoyeth.'

Nature, which that alway had an ere
To murmour of the lewednes behinde,
With facound voys seide, 'hold your tonges there!'
And I shal sone, I hope, a counseyl finde
You to delivere, and fro this noyse unbinde;
I juge, of every folk men shal oon calle
To seyn the verdit for you foules alle.'

Assented were to this conclusioun
The briddes alle; and foules of ravyne
Han chosen first, by pleyn electioun,
The tercelet of the faucon, to diffyne
Al hir sentence, and as him list, termyne;
And to Nature him gonnen to presente,
And she accepteth him with glad entente.

The tercelet seide than in this manere:
'Ful hard were hit to preve hit by resoun
Who loveth best this gentil formel here;
For everich hath swich replicacioun,
That noon by skilles may be broght a-doun;
I can not seen that arguments avayle;
Than semeth hit ther moste be batayle.'

'Al redy!' quod these egles tercels tho.
'Nay, sirs!' quod he, 'if that I dorste it seye,
Ye doon me wrong, my tale is not y-do!
For sirs, ne taketh noght a-gref, I preye,
It may noght gon, as ye wolde, in this weye;
Oure is the voys that han the charge in honde,
And to the juges dome ye moten stonde;

And therfor pees! I seye, as to my wit,
Me wolde thinke how that the worthieste
Of knighthode, and lengest hath used hit,
Moste of estat, of blode the gentileste,
Were sittingest for hir, if that hir leste;
And of these three she wot hir-self, I trowe,
Which that he be, for hit is light to knowe.'

The water-foules han her hedes leyd
Togeder, and of short avysement,
Whan everich had his large golee seyd,
They seyden sothly, al by oon assent,
How that 'the goos, with hir facounde gent,
That so desyreth to pronounce our nede,
Shal telle our tale,' and preyde 'god hir spede.'

And for these water-foules tho began
The goos to speke, and in hir cakelinge
She seyde, 'pees! now tak kepe every man,
And herkeneth which a reson I shal bringe;
My wit is sharp, I love no taryinge;
I seye, I rede him, though he were my brother,
But she wol love him, lat him love another!'

'Lo here! a parfit reson of a goos!'
Quod the sperhauk; 'never mot she thee!
Lo, swich hit is to have a tonge loos!
Now parde, fool, yet were hit bet for thee
Have holde thy pees, than shewed thy nycete!
Hit lyth not in his wit nor in his wille,
But sooth is seyd, "a fool can noght be stille."'

The laughter aroos of gentil foules alle,
And right anoon the seed-foul chosen hadde
The turtel trewe, and gunne hir to hem calle,
And preyden hir to seye the sothe sadde
Of this matere, and asked what she radde;
And she answerde, that pleynly hir entente
She wolde shewe, and sothly what she mente.

'Nay, god forbede a lover shulde chaunge!'
The turtel seyde, and wex for shame al reed;
'Thogh that his lady ever-more be straunge,
Yet let him serve hir ever, til he be deed;
For sothe, I preyse noght the gooses reed;
For thogh she deyed, I wolde non other make,
I wol ben hires, til that the deth me take.'

'Wel bourded!' quod the doke, 'by my hat!
That men shulde alwey loven, causeles,
Who can a reson finde or wit in that?
Daunceth he mury that is mirtheles?
Who shulde recche of that is reccheles?
Ye, quek!' yit quod the doke, ful wel and faire,
'There been mo sterres, god wot, than a paire!'

'Now fy, cherl!' quod the gentil tercelet,
'Out of the dunghil com that word ful right,
Thou canst noght see which thing is wel be-set:
Thou farest by love as oules doon by light,
The day hem blent, ful wel they see by night;
Thy kind is of so lowe a wrechednesse,
That what love is, thou canst nat see ne gesse.'

Tho gan the cukkow putte him forth in prees
For foul that eteth worm, and seide blyve,
'So I,' quod he, 'may have my make in pees,
I recche not how longe that ye stryve;
Lat ech of hem be soleyn al hir lyve,
This is my reed, sin they may not acorde;
This shorte lesson nedeth noght recorde.'

'Ye! have the glotoun fild ynogh his paunche,
Than are we wel!' seyde the merlioun;
'Thou mordrer of the heysugge on the braunche
That broghte thee forth, thou rewthelees glotoun!
Live thou soleyn, wormes corrupcioun!
For no fors is of lakke of thy nature;
Go, lewed be thou, whyl the world may dure!'

'Now pees,' quod Nature, 'I comaunde here;
For I have herd al your opinioun,
And in effect yet be we never the nere;
But fynally, this is my conclusioun,
That she hir-self shal han the electioun
Of whom hir list, who-so be wrooth or blythe,
Him that she cheest, he shal hir have as swythe.

For sith hit may not here discussed be
Who loveth hir best, as seide the tercelet,
Than wol I doon hir this favour, that she
Shal have right him on whom hir herte is set,
And he hir that his herte hath on her knet.
This juge I, Nature, for I may not lyë :
To noon estat I have non other yë.

But as for counseyl for to chese a make,
If hit were reson, certes, than wolde I
Counseyle yow the royal tercel take,
As seide the tercelet ful skilfully,
As for the gentilest and most worthy,
Which I have wroght so wel to my plesaunce ;
That to yow oghte been a suffisaunce.'

With dredful vois the formel hir answerde,
'My rightful lady, goddesse of Nature,
Soth is that I am ever under your yerde,
Lyk as is everiche other creature,
And moot be youres whyl my lyf may dure ;
And therfor graunteth me my firste bone,
And myn entente I wol yow sey right sone.'

'I graunte it you,' quod she ; and right anoon
This formel egle spak in this degree,
'Almighty quene, unto this yeer be doon
I aske respit for to avysen me.
And after that to have my choys al free ;
This al and som, that I wolde speke and seye ;
Ye gete no more, al-though ye do me deye.

I wol noght serven Venus ne Cupyde
For sothe as yet, by no manere wey.'
'Now sin it may non other wyse betyde,'
Quod tho Nature, 'here is no more to sey ;
Than wolde I that these foules were a-wey
Ech with his make, for tarying lenger here'—
And seyde hem thus, as ye shul after here.

'To you speke I, ye tercelets,' quod Nature,
'Beth of good herte and serveth, alle three;
A yeer is not so longe to endure,
And ech of yow peyne him, in his degree,
For to do wel; for, god wot, quit is she
Fro yow this yeer; what after so befalle,
This entremes is dressed for you alle.'

And whan this werk al broght was to an ende,
To every foule Nature yaf his make
By even acorde, and on hir wey they wende.
A! lord! the blisse and joye that they make!
For ech of hem gan other in winges take,
And with hir nekkes ech gan other winde,
Thanking alwey the noble goddesse of kinde.

But first were chosen foules for to singe,
As yeer by yere was alwey hir usaunce
To singe a roundel at hir departinge,
To do Nature honour and plesaunce.
The note, I trowe, maked was in Fraunce;
The wordes were swich as ye may heer finde,
The nexte vers, as I now have in minde.

Qui bien aime a tard oublie

'Now welcom somer, with thy sonne softe,
That hast this wintres weders over-shake,
And driven awey the longe nightes blake!

Seynt Valentyn, that art ful hy onlofte;—
Thus singen smale foules for thy sake—
Now welcom somer, with thy sonne softe,
That hast this wintres weders over-shake.

Wel han they cause for to gladen ofte,
Sith ech of hem recovered hath his make;
Ful blisful may they singen whan they wake;
Now welcom somer, with thy sonne softe,
That hast this wintres weders over-shake,
And driven awey the longe nightes blake.'

And with the showting, whan hir song was do,
That foules maden at hir flight a-way,
I wook, and other bokes took me to
To rede upon, and yet I rede alway ;
I hope, y-wis, to rede so som day
That I shal mete som thing for to fare
The bet ; and thus to rede I nil not spare.

Explicit tractatus de congregacione Volucrum die sancti Valentini.

VI. A COMPLEINT TO HIS LADY

I. (*In seven-line stanzas.*)

The longe night, whan every creature
Shulde have hir rest in somwhat, as by kinde,
Or elles ne may hir lyf nat long endure,
Hit falleth most in-to my woful minde
How I so fer have broght my-self behinde,
That, sauf the deeth, ther may no-thing me lisse,
So desespaired I am from alle blisse.

This same thoght me lasteth til the morwe,
And from the morwe forth til hit be eve;
Ther nedeth me no care for to borwe,
For bothe I have good leyser and good leve;
Ther is no wight that wol me wo bereve
To wepe y-nogh, and wailen al my fille;
The sore spark of peyne doth me spille.

II. (*In Terza Rima; imperfect.*)

The sore spark of peyne doth me spille;
This Love hath eek me set in swich a place
That my desyr he never wol fulfille;
For neither pitee, mercy, neither grace
Can I nat finde; and fro my sorwful herte,
For to be deed, I can hit nat arace.
The more I love, the more she doth me smerte;
Through which I see, with-oute remedye,
That from the deeth I may no wyse asterte;
For this day in hir servise shal I dye.

III. (*In Terza Rima ; imperfect.*)

Thus am I slain, with sorwes ful dyverse ;
Ful longe agoon I oghte have taken hede.
Now sothly, what she hight I wol reherse ;
Hir name is Bountee, set in womanhede,
Sadnesse in youthe, and Beautee prydelees,
And Plesaunce, under governaunce and drede ;
Hir surname eek is Faire Rewthelees,
The Wyse, y-knit un-to Good Aventure,
That, for I love hir, sleeth me giltelees.
Hir love I best, and shal, whyl I may dure,
Bet than my-self an hundred thousand deel,
Than al this worldes richesse or creature.
Now hath nat Lovë me bestowed weel
To lovë, ther I never shal have part?
Allas ! right thus is turned me the wheel,
Thus am I slayn with loves fyry dart.
I can but love hir best, my swete fo ;
Love hath me taught no more of his art
But serve alwey, and stinte for no wo.

IV. (*In ten-line stanzas.*)

With-in my trewe careful herte ther is
So moche wo, and eek so litel blis,
That wo is me that ever I was bore ;
For al that thing which I desyre I mis,
And al that ever I wolde nat, I-wis,
That finde I redy to me evermore ;
And of al this I not to whom me pleyne.
For she that mighte me out of this bringe
Ne reccheth nat whether I wepe or singe ;
So litel rewthe hath she upon my peyne.

Allas ! whan sleping-time is, than I wake,
Whan I shulde daunce, for fere than I quake ;
Yow rekketh never wher I flete or sinke ;
This hevy lyf I lede for your sake,
Thogh ye ther-of in no wyse hede take,
For on my wo yow deyneth not to thinke.

My hertes lady, and hool my lyves quene !
For trewly dorste I seye, as that I fele,
Me semeth that your swete herte of stele
Is whetted now ageynes me to kene.

My dere herte, and best beloved fo,
Why lyketh yow to do me al this wo,
What have I doon that greveth yow, or sayd,
But for I serve and love yow and no mo ?
And whylst I live, I wol do ever so ;
And therfor, swete, ne beth nat evil apayd.
For so good and so fair as that ye be,
Hit were a right gret wonder but ye hadde
Of alle servants, bothe goode and badde ;
And leest worthy of alle hem, I am he.

But never-the-les, my righte lady swete,
Thogh that I be unconning and unmete
To serve as I best coude ay your hynesse,
Yit is ther fayner noon, that wolde I hete,
Than I, to do yow ese, or elles bete
What-so I wiste were to yow distresse.
And hadde I might as good as I have wille,
Than shulde ye fele wher it wer so or noon ;
For in this worlde living is ther noon
That fayner wolde your hertes wil fulfille.

For bothe I love, and eek dreed yow so sore,
And algates moot, and have doon yow, ful yore,
That bet loved is noon, ne never shal ;
And yit I wolde beseche yow of no more
But leveth wel, and be nat wrooth therfore,
And lat me serve yow forth ; lo ! this is al.
For I am nat so hardy ne so wood
For to desire that ye shulde love me ;
For wel I wot, allas ! that may nat be ;
I am so litel worthy, and ye so good.

For ye be oon the worthiest on-lyve,
And I the most unlykly for to thryve ;

Yit, for al this, now witeth ye right wele,
That ye ne shul me from your service dryve
That I nil ay, with alle my wittes fyve,
Serve yow trewly, what wo so that I fele.
For I am set on yow in swich manere
That, thogh ye never wil upon me rewe,
I moste yow love, and ever been as trewe
As any can or may on-lyve here.

The more that I love yow, goodly free,
The lasse finde I that ye loven me;
Allas! whan shal that harde wit amende?
Wher is now al your wommanly pitee,
Your gentilesse and your debonairtee,
Wil ye no thing ther-of upon me spende?
And so hool, swete, as I am youres al,
And so gret wil as I have yow to serve,
Now, certes, and ye lete me thus sterve,
Yit have ye wonne ther-on but a smal.

For, at my knowing, I do no-thing why,
And this I wol beseche yow hertely,
That, ther ever ye finde, whyl ye live,
A trewer servant to yow than am I,
Leveth me thanne, and sleeth me hardely,
And I my deeth to you wol al forgive.
And if ye finde no trewer man than me,
Why will ye suffre than that I thus spille,
And for no maner gilt but my good wille?
As good wer thanne untrewe as trewe to be.

But I, my lyf and deeth, to yow obeye,
And with right buxom herte hoolly I preye,
As is your moste plesure, so doth by me;
Wel lever is me lyken yow and deye
Than for to any thing or thinke or seye
That mighte yow offende in any tyme.
And therfor, swete, rewe on my peynes smerte,
And of your grace granteth me som drope;
For elles may me laste blis ne hope,
Ne dwellen in my trouble careful herte.

VII. ANELIDA AND ARCITE

The Complevnt of feire Anelida and fals Arcite

Proem

Thou ferse god of armes, Mars the rede,
That in the frosty country called Trace,
Within thy grisly temple ful of drede
Honoured art, as patroun of that place!
With thy Bellona, Pallas, ful of grace,
Be present, and my song continue and gye;
At my beginning thus to thee I crye.

For hit ful depe is sonken in my minde,
With pitous herte in English for t'endyte
This olde storie, in Latin which I finde,
Of quene Anelida and fals Arcite,
That elde, which that al can frete and byte,
As hit hath freten mony a noble storie,
Hath nigh devoured out of our memorie.

Be favorable eek, thou Polymnia,
On Parnaso that, with thy sustres glade,
By Elicon, not fer from Cirrea,
Singest with vois memorial in the shade,
Under the laurer which that may not fade,
And do that I my ship to haven winne;
First folow I Stace, and after him Corinne.

The Story

Iamque domos patrias, &c. ; Statii Thebais, xii. 519.

Whan Theseus, with werres longe and grete,
The aspre folk of Cithe had over-come,
With laurer crouned, in his char gold-bete,
Hoom to his contre-houses is y-come ;—
For which the peple blisful, al and somme,
So cryden, that unto the sterres hit wente,
And him to honouren dide al hir entente ;—

Beforn this duk, in signe of hy victorie,
The trompes come, and in his baner large
The image of Mars ; and, in token of glorie,
Men mighten seen of tresor many a charge,
Many a bright helm, and many a spere and targe,
Many a fresh knight, and many a blisful route,
On hors, on fote, in al the felde aboute.

Ipolita his wyf, the hardy quene
Of Cithia, that he conquered hadde,
With Emelye, hir yonge suster shene,
Faire in a char of golde he with him ladde,
That al the ground aboute hir char she spradde
With brightnesse of the beautee in hir face,
Fulfild of largesse and of alle grace.

With his triumphe and laurer-crouned thus,
In all the floure of fortunes yevinge,
Lete I this noble prince Theseus
Toward Athenes in his wey rydinge,
And founde I wol in shortly for to bringe
The slye wey of that I gan to wryte,
Of quene Anelida and fals Arcite.

Mars, which that through his furious course of yre,
The olde wrath of Juno to fulfille,
Hath set the peples hertes bothe on fyre
Of Thebes and Grece, everich other to kille
With blody speres, ne rested never stille,

But throng now her, now ther, among hem bothe,
That everich other slough, so wer they wrothe.

For whan Amphiorax and Tydeus,
Ipomedon, Parthonopee also
Were dede, and slayn was proud Campaneus,
And whan the wrecches Thebans, bretheren two,
Were slayn, and king Adrastus hoom a-go,
So desolat stood Thebes and so bare,
That no wight coude remedie of his care.

And whan the olde Creon gan espye
How that the blood roial was broght adoun,
He held the cite by his tirannye,
And did the gentils of that regioun
To been his frendes, and dwellen in the toun.
So what for love of him, and what for awe,
The noble folk wer to the toune y-drawe.

Among al these, Anelida the quene
Of Ermony was in that toun dwellinge,
That fairer was then is the sonne shene;
Through-out the world so gan hir name springe,
That hir to seen had every wight lykinge;
For, as of trouthe, is ther noon hir liche,
Of al the women in this worlde riche.

Yong was this quene, of twenty yeer of elde,
Of midel stature, and of swich fairnesse,
That nature had a joye hir to behelde;
And for to speken of hir stedfastnesse,
She passed hath Penelope and Lucresse,
And shortly, if she shal be comprehended,
In hir ne mighte no-thing been amended.

This Theban knight Arcite eek, sooth to seyn,
Was yong, and ther-with-al a lusty knight,
But he was double in love and no-thing pleyn,
And subtil in that crafte over any wight,
And with his cunning wan this lady bright;

For so ferforth he gan hir trouthe assure,
That she him trust over any creature.

What shuld I seyn? she loved Arcite so,
That, whan that he was absent any throwe,
Anon hir thoghte hir herte brast a-two;
For in hir sight to hir he bar him lowe,
So that she wende have al his herte y-knowe;
But he was fals; it nas but feyned chere,
As nedeth not to men such craft to lere.

But never-the-les ful mikel besinesse
Had he, er that he mighte his lady winne,
And swoor he wolde dyen for distresse,
Or from his wit he seyde he wolde twinne.
Alas, the whyle! for hit was routhe and sinne,
That she upon his sorowes wolde rewe,
But no-thing thenketh the fals as doth the trewe.

Hir fredom fond Arcite in swich manere,
That al was his that she hath, moche or lyte,
Ne to no creature made she chere
Ferther than that hit lyked to Arcite;
Ther was no lak with which he mighte hir wyte,
She was so ferforth yeven him to plese,
That al that lyked him, hit did hir ese.

Ther nas to hir no maner lettre y-sent
That touched love, from any maner wight,
That she ne shewed hit him, er hit was brent;
So pleyn she was, and did hir fulle might,
That she nil hyden nothing from hir knight,
Lest he of any untrouthe hir upbreyde;
Withouten bode his heste she obeyde.

And eek he made him jelous over here,
That, what that any man had to hir seyd,
Anoon he wolde preyen hir to swere
What was that word, or make him evel apayd;
Than wende she out of hir wit have brayd;

But al this nas but sleight and flaterye,
Withouten love he feyned jelosye.

And al this took she so debonerly,
That al his wille, hir thoghte hit skilful thing,
And ever the lenger loved him tenderly,
And did him honour as he were a king.
Hir herte was wedded to him with a ring;
So ferforth upon trouthe is hir entente,
That wher he goth, hir herte with him wente.

Whan she sha. ete, on him is so hir thoght,
That wel unnethe of mete took she keep;
And whan that she was to hir reste broght,
On him she thoghte alwey til that she sleep;
Whan he was absent, prevely she weep;
Thus liveth fair Anelida the quene
For fals Arcite, that did hir al this tene.

This fals Arcite, of his new-fangelnesse,
For she to him so lowly was and trewe,
Took lesse deyntee for hir stedfastnesse,
And saw another lady, proud and newe,
And right anon he cladde him in hir hewe—
Wot I not whether in whyte, rede, or grene—
And falsed fair Anelida the quene.

But never-the-les, gret wonder was hit noon
Thogh he were fals, for hit is kinde of man,
Sith Lamek was, that is so longe agoon,
To been in love as fals as ever he can;
He was the firste fader that began
To loven two, and was in bigamye;
And he found tentes first, but-if men lye.

This fals Arcite sumwhat moste he feyne,
Whan he wex fals, to covere his traitorye,
Right as an hors, that can both byte and pleyne;
For he bar hir on honde of trecherye,
And swoor he coude hir doublenesse espye,

And al was falsnes that she to him mente;
Thus swoor this theef, and forth his way he wente.

Alas! what herte might enduren hit,
For routhe or wo, hir sorow for to telle?
Or what man hath the cunning or the wit?
Or what man might with-in the chambre dwelle,
If I to him rehersen shal the helle,
That suffreth fair Anelida the quene
For fals Arcite, that did hir al this tene?

She wepeth, waileth, swowneth pitously,
To grounde deed she falleth as a stoon;
Al crampissheth hir limes crokedly,
She speketh as hir wit were al agoon;
Other colour then asshen hath she noon,
Noon other word she speketh moche or lyte,
But 'mercy, cruel herte myn, Arcite!'

And thus endureth, til that she was so mate
That she ne hath foot on which she may sustene;
But forth languisshing ever in this estate,
Of which Arcite hath nother routhe ne tene;
His herte was elles-where, newe and grene,
That on hir wo ne deyneth him not to thinke,
Him rekketh never wher she flete or sinke.

His newe lady holdeth him so narowe
Up by the brydel, at the staves ende,
That every word, he dradde hit as an arowe;
Hir daunger made him bothe bowe and bende,
And as hir liste, made him turne or wende;
For she ne graunted him in hir livinge
No grace, why that he hath lust to singe;

But drof him forth, unnethe liste hir knowe
That he was servaunt to hir ladyshippe,
But lest that he wer proude, she held him lowe;
Thus serveth he, withouten fee or shipe,
She sent him now to londe, now to shippe;

And for she yaf him daunger al his fille,
Therfor she had him at hir owne wille.

Ensample of this, ye thrifty wimmen alle,
Take here Anelida and fals Arcite,
That for hir liste him 'dere herte' calle,
And was so meek, therfor he loved hir lyte;
The kinde of mannes herte is to delyte
In thing that straunge is, also god me save!
For what he may not gete, that wolde he have.

Now turne we to Anelida ageyn,
That pyneth day by day in languisshing;
But whan she saw that hir ne gat no geyn,
Upon a day, ful sorowfully weping,
She caste hir for to make a compleyning,
And with hir owne honde she gan hit wryte;
And sente hit to hir Theban knight Arcite.

The Complevnt of Anelida the quene upon fals Arcite

Proem

So thirleth with the poynt of remembraunce,
The swerd of sorowe, y-whet with fals plesaunce,
  Myn herte, bare of blis and blak of hewe,
That turned is in quaking al my daunce,
My suretee in a-whaped countenaunce;
  Sith hit availeth not for to ben trewe;
  For who-so trewest is, hit shal hir rewe,
That serveth love and doth hir observaunce
  Alwey to oon, and chaungeth for no newe.

(Strophe)

1

I wot my-self as wel as any wight;
For I loved oon with al my herte and might

More then my-self, an hundred thousand sythe,
And called him my hertes lyf, my knight,
And was al his, as fer as hit was right;
And whan that he was glad, than was I blythe,
And his disese was my deeth as swythe;
And he ayein his trouthe me had plight
For ever-more, his lady me to kythe.

2

Now is he fals, alas! and causeles,
And of my wo he is so routheles,
That with a worde him list not ones deyne
To bring ayein my sorowful herte in pees,
For he is caught up in a-nother lees.
Right as him list, he laugheth at my peyne,
And I ne can myn herte not restreyne,
That I ne love him alwey, never-the-les;
And of al this I not to whom me pleyne.

3

And shal I pleyne—alas! the harde stounde—
Un-to my foo that yaf my herte a wounde,
And yet desyreth that myn harm be more?
Nay, certes! ferther wol I never founde
Non other help, my sores for to sounde.
My destinee hath shapen it ful yore;
I wil non other medecyne ne lore;
I wil ben ay ther I was ones bounde,
That I have seid, be seid for ever-more!

4

Alas! wher is become your gentilesse!
Your wordes fulle of plesaunce and humblesse?
Your observaunces in so low manere,
And your awayting and your besinesse
Upon me, that ye calden your maistresse,

Your sovereyn lady in this worlde here?
Alas! and is ther nother word ne chere
Ye vouchesauf upon myn hevinesse?
Alas! your love, I bye hit al to dere.

5

Now certes, swete, thogh that ye
Thus causeles the cause be
Of my dedly adversitee,
Your manly reson oghte it to respyte
To slee your frend, and namely me,
That never yet in no degree
Offended yow, as wisly he,
That al wot, out of wo my soule quyte!

But for I shewed yow, Arcite,
Al that men wolde to me wryte,
And was so besy, yow to delyte—
My honour save—meke, kinde, and free,
Therfor ye putte on me the wyte,
And of me recche not a myte,
Thogh that the swerd of sorow byte
My woful herte through your crueltee.

6

My swete foo, why do ye so, for shame?
And thenke ye that furthered be your name,
To love a newe, and been untrewe? nay!
And putte yow in sclaunder now and blame,
And do to me adversitee and grame,
That love yow most, god, wel thou wost! alway?
Yet turn ayeyn, and be al pleyn som day,
And than shal this that now is mis be game,
And al for-yive, whyl that I live may.

(*Antistrophe*)

1

Lo! herte myn, al this is for to seyne,
As whether shal I preye or elles pleyne?

Whiche is the wey to doon yow to be trewe?
For either mot I have yow in my cheyne,
Or with the dethe ye mot departe us tweyne;
Ther ben non other mene weyes newe;
For god so wisly on my soule rewe,
As verily ye sleen me with the peyne;
That may ye see unfeyned of myn hewe.

2

For thus ferforth have I my deth y-soght,
My-self I mordre with my prevy thoght;
For sorow and routhe of your unkindenesse
I wepe, I wake, I faste; al helpeth noght;
I weyve joye that is to speke of oght,
I voyde companye, I flee gladnesse;
Who may avaunte hir bet of hevinesse
Then I? and to this plyte have ye me broght,
Withoute gilt; me nedeth no witnesse.

3

And sholde I preye, and weyve womanhede?
Nay! rather deth then do so foul a dede,
And axe mercy gilteles! what nede?
And if I pleyne what lyf that I lede,
Yow rekketh not; that know I, out of drede;
And if I unto yow myn othes bede
For myn excuse, a scorn shal be my mede;
Your chere floureth, but hit wol not sede;
Ful longe agoon I oghte have take hede.

4

For thogh I hadde yow to-morow ageyn,
I might as wel holde Averill fro reyn,
As holde yow, to make yow stedfast.
Almighty god, of trouthe sovereyn,
Wher is the trouthe of man? who hath hit sleyn?
Who that hem loveth shal hem fynde as fast
As in a tempest is a roten mast.
Is that a tame best that is ay feyn
To renne away, when he is leest agast?

5

Now mercy, swete, if I misseye,
Have I seyd oght amis, I preye?
I not; my wit is al aweye.
I fare as doth the song of *Chaunte-pleure*.
For now I pleyne, and now I pleye,
I am so mased that I deye,
Arcite hath born awey the keye
Of al my worlde, and my good aventure!

For in this worlde nis creature
Wakinge, in more discomfiture
Then I, ne more sorow endure;
And if I slepe a furlong wey or tweye,
Than thinketh me, that your figure
Before me stant, clad in asure,
To profren eft a newe assure
For to be trewe, and mercy me to preye.

6

The longe night this wonder sight I drye,
And on the day for this afray I dye,
And of al this right noght, y-wis, ye recche.
Ne never mo myn yën two be drye,
And to your routhe and to your trouthe I crye.
But welawey! to fer be they to fecche;
Thus holdeth me my destinee a wrecche.
But me to rede out of this drede or gye
Ne may my wit, so weyk is hit, not strecche.

Conclusion

Than ende I thus, sith I may do no more,
I yeve hit up for now and ever-more;
For I shal never eft putten in balaunce
My sekernes, ne lerne of love the lore.
But as the swan, I have herd seyd ful yore,
Ayeins his deth shal singe in his penaunce,
So singe I here my destiny or chaunce,
How that Arcite Anelida so sore
Hath thirled with the poynt of remembraunce!

The story continued

Whan that Anelida this woful quene
Hath of hir hande writen in this wyse,
With face deed, betwixe pale and grene,
She fel a-swowe; and sith she gan to ryse,
And unto Mars avoweth sacrifyse
With-in the temple, with a sorowful chere
That shapen was as ye shal after here.

(*Unfinished.*)

VIII. CHAUCERS WORDES UNTO ADAM, HIS OWNE SCRIVEYN

Adam scriveyn, if ever it thee bifalle
Boece or Troilus to wryten newe,
Under thy lokkes thou most have the scalle,
But after my making thou wryte trewe.
So ofte a daye I mot thy werk renewe,
Hit to correcte and eek to rubbe and scrape;
And al is through thy negligence and rape.

IX. THE FORMER AGE

A BLISFUL lyf, a paisible and a swete
Ledden the peples in the former age;
They helde hem payed of fruites, that they ete,
Which that the feldes yave hem by usage;
They ne were nat forpampred with outrage;
Unknowen was the quern and eek the melle;
They eten mast, hawes, and swich pounage,
And dronken water of the colde welle.

Yit nas the ground nat wounded with the plough,
But corn up-sprong, unsowe of mannes hond,
The which they gnideu, and eete nat half y-nough.
No man yit knew the forwes of his lond;
No man the fyr out of the flint yit fond;
Un-korven and un-grobbed lay the vyne;
No man yit in the morter spyces grond
To clarre, ne to sause of galantyne.

No mader, welde, or wood no litestere
Ne knew; the flees was of his former hewe;
No flesh ne wiste offence of egge or spere;
No coyn ne knew man which was fals or trewe;
No ship yit karf the wawes grene and blewe;
No marchaunt yit ne fette outlandish ware;
No trompes for the werres folk ne knewe,
No toures heye, and walles rounde or square.

What sholde it han avayled to werreye?
Ther lay no profit, ther was no richesse,
But cursed was the tyme, I dar wel seye,
That men first dide hir swety bysinesse

To grobbe up metal, lurkinge in darknesse,
And in the riveres first gemmes soghte.
Allas! than sprong up al the cursednesse
Of covetyse, that first our sorwe broghte!

Thise tyraunts putte hem gladly nat in pres,
No wildnesse, ne no busshes for to winne
Ther poverte is, as seith Diogenes,
Ther as vitaile is eek so skars and thinne
That noght but mast or apples is ther-inne.
But, ther as bagges been and fat vitaile,
Ther wol they gon, and spare for no sinne
With al hir ost the cite for t'assaile.

Yit were no paleis-chaumbres, ne non halles;
In caves and in wodes softe and swete
Slepten this blissed folk with-oute walles,
On gras or leves in parfit quiete.
No doun of fetheres, ne no bleched shete
Was kid to hem, but in seurtee they slepte;
Hir hertes were al oon, with-oute galles,
Everich of hem his feith to other kepte.

Unforged was the hauberk and the plate;
The lambish peple, voyd of alle vyce,
Hadden no fantasye to debate,
But ech of hem wolde other wel cheryce;
No pryde, non envye, non avaryce,
No lord, no taylage by no tyrannye;
Humblesse and pees, good feith, the emperice,
Fulfilled erthe of olde curtesye.

Yit was not Jupiter the likerous,
That first was fader of delicacye,
Come in this world; ne Nembrot, desirous
To reynen, had nat maad his toures hye.
Allas, allas! now may men wepe and crye!
For in our dayes nis but covetyse
And doublenesse, and tresoun and envye,
Poysoun, manslauhtre, and mordre in sondry wyse.

Finit Etas prima. Chaucers.

X. FORTUNE

Balades de visage sanz peinture

I. Le Pleintif countre Fortune

This wrecched worldes transmutacioun,
As wele or wo, now povre and now honour,
With-outen ordre or wys discrecioun
Governed is by Fortunes errour ;
But natheles, the lak of hir favour
Ne may nat don me singen, though I dye,
'I ay tout perdu mon temps et mon labour :'
For fynally, Fortune, I thee defye !

Yit is me left the light of my resoun,
To knowen frend fro fo in thy mirour.
So muche hath yit thy whirling up and doun
Y-taught me for to knowen in an hour.
But trewely, no force of thy reddour
To him that over him-self hath the maystrye !
My suffisaunce shal be my socour :
For fynally, Fortune, I thee defye !

O Socrates, thou stedfast champioun,
She never mighte be thy tormentour ;
Thou never dreddest hir oppressioun,
Ne in hir chere founde thou no savour.
Thou knewe wel deceit of hir colour,
And that hir moste worshipe is to lye.
I knowe hir eek a fals dissimulour :
For fynally, Fortune, I thee defye !

II. La respounse de Fortune au Pleintif

No man is wrecched, but him-self hit wene,
And he that hath him-self hath suffisaunce.
Why seystow thanne I am to thee so kene,
That hast thy-self out of my governaunce?
Sey thus: 'Graunt mercy of thyn haboundaunce
That thou hast lent or this.' Why wolt thou stryve?
What wostow yit, how I thee wol avaunce?
And eek thou hast thy beste frend alyve!

I have thee taught divisioun bi-twene
Frend of effect, and frend of countenaunce;
Thee nedeth nat the galle of noon hyene,
That cureth eyen derke fro hir penaunce;
Now seestow cleer, that were in ignoraunce.
Yit halt thyn ancre, and yit thou mayst arryve
Ther bountee berth the keye of my substaunce:
And eek thou hast thy beste frend alyve.

How many have I refused to sustene,
Sin I thee fostred have in thy plesaunce!
Woltow than make a statut on thy quene
That I shal been ay at thyn ordinaunce?
Thou born art in my regne of variaunce,
Aboute the wheel with other most thou dryve.
My lore is bet than wikke is thy grevaunce,
And eek thou hast thy beste frend alyve.

III. La respounse du Pleintif countre Fortune

Thy lore I dampne, hit is adversitee.
My frend maystow nat reven, blind goddesse!
That I thy frendes knowe, I thanke hit thee.
Tak hem agayn, lat hem go lye on presse!
The negardye in keping hir richesse
Prenostik is thou wolt hir tour assayle;
Wikke appetyt comth ay before seknesse
In general, this reule may nat fayle.

La respounse de Fortune countre le Pleintif

Thou pinchest at my mutabilitee,
For I thee lente a drope of my richesse,
And now me lyketh to with-drawe me.
Why sholdestow my realtee oppresse?
The see may ebbe and flowen more or lesse;
The welkne hath might to shyne, reyne, or hayle;
Right so mot I kythen my brotelnesse.
In general, this reule may nat fayle.

Lo, th'execucion of the magestee
That al purveyeth of his rightwisnesse,
That same thing 'Fortune' clepen ye,
Ye blinde bestes, ful of lewednesse!
The hevene hath propretee of sikernesse,
This world hath ever resteles travayle;
Thy laste day is ende of myn intresse:
In general, this reule may nat fayle.

Lenvoy de Fortune

Princes, I prey you of your gentilesse,
Lat nat this man on me thus crye and pleyne,
And I shal quyte you your bisinesse
At my requeste, as three of you or tweyne;
And, but you list releve him of his peyne,
Preyeth his beste frend, of his noblesse,
That to som beter estat he may atteyne.

Explicit.

XI. MERCILES BEAUTE: A TRIPLE ROUNDEL

I. Captivity

Your yën two wol slee me sodenly,
I may the beautè of hem not sustene,
So woundeth hit through-out my herte kene.

And but your word wol helen hastily
My hertes wounde, whyl that hit is grene,
Your yën two wol slee me sodenly,
I may the beautè of hem not sustene.

Upon my trouthe I sey yow feithfully,
That ye ben of my lyf and deeth the quene;
For with my deeth the trouthe shal be sene.
Your yën two wol slee me sodenly,
I may the beautè of hem not sustene,
So woundeth hit through-out my herte kene.

II. Rejection

So hath your beautè fro your herte chaced
Pitee, that me ne availeth not to pleyne;
For Daunger halt your mercy in his cheyne.

Giltles my deeth thus han ye me purchaced;
I sey yow sooth, me nedeth not to feyne;
So hath your beautè fro your herte chaced
Pitee, that me ne availeth not to pleyne.

Allas! that nature hath in yow compassed
So greet beautè, that no man may atteyne
To mercy, though he sterve for the peyne.
So hath your beautè fro your herte chaced
Pitee, that me ne availeth not to pleyne;
For Daunger halt your mercy in his cheyne.

III. Escape

Sin I fro Love escaped am so fat,
I never thenk to ben in his prison lene;
Sin I am free, I counte him not a bene.

He may answere, and seye this or that;
I do no fors, I speke right as I mene.
Sin I fro Love escaped am so fat,
I never thenk to ben in his prison lene.

Love hath my name y-strike out of his sclat,
And he is strike out of my bokes clene
For ever-mo; ther is non other mene.
Sin I fro Love escaped am so fat,
I never thenk to ben in his prison lene;
Sin I am free, I counte him not a bene.

Explicit.

XII. TO ROSEMOUNDE. A BALADE

Madame, ye ben of al beautè shryne
As fer as cercled is the mappemounde;
For as the cristal glorious ye shyne,
And lyke ruby ben your chekes rounde.
Therwith ye ben so mery and so jocounde,
That at a revel whan that I see you daunce,
It is an oynement unto my wounde,
Thogh ye to me ne do no daliaunce.

For thogh I wepe of teres ful a tyne,
Yet may that wo myn herte nat confounde;
Your seemly voys that ye so smal out-twyne
Maketh my thoght in joye and blis habounde.
So curteisly I go, with lovë bounde,
That to my-self I sey, in my penaunce,
Suffyseth me to love you, Rosemounde,
Thogh ye to me ne do no daliaunce.

Nas never pyk walwed in galauntyne
As I in love am walwed and y-wounde;
For which ful ofte I of my-self divyne
That I am trewe Tristam the secounde.
My love may not refreyd be nor afounde;
I brenne ay in an amorous plesaunce.
Do what you list, I wil your thral be founde,
Thogh ye to me ne do no daliaunce.

Tregentil. *Chaucer.*

XIII. TRUTH

Balade de bon conseyl

Flee fro the prees, and dwelle with sothfastnesse,
Suffyce unto thy good, though hit be smal;
For hord hath hate, and climbing tikelnesse,
Prees hath envye, and wele blent overal;
Savour no more than thee bihove shal;
Werk wel thy-self, that other folk canst rede;
And trouthe shal delivere, hit is no drede.

Tempest thee noght al croked to redresse,
In trust of hir that turneth as a bal:
Gret reste stant in litel besinesse;
And eek be war to sporne ageyn an al;
Stryve noght, as doth the crokke with the wal.
Daunte thy-self, that dauntest otheres dede;
And trouthe shal delivere, hit is no drede.

That thee is sent, receyve in buxumnesse,
The wrastling for this worlde axeth a fal.
Her nis non hoom, her nis but wildernesse:
Forth, pilgrim, forth! Forth, beste, out of thy stal!
Know thy contree, look up, thank God of al;
Hold the hye wey, and lat thy gost thee lede:
And trouthe shal delivere, hit is no drede.

Envoy

Therfore, thou vache, leve thyn old wrecchednesse
Unto the worlde; leve now to be thral;
Crye him mercy, that of his hy goodnesse
Made thee of noght, and in especial
Draw unto him, and pray in general
For thee, and eek for other, hevenlich mede;
And trouthe shal delivere, hit is no drede.

Explicit Le bon counseill de G. Chaucer.

XIV. GENTILESSE

Moral Balade of Chaucer

The firste stok, fader of gentilesse—
What man that claymeth gentil for to be,
Must folowe his trace, and alle his wittes dresse
Vertu to sewe, and vyces for to flee.
For unto vertu longeth dignitee,
And noght the revers, saufly dar I deme,
Al were he mytre, croune, or diademe.

This firste stok was ful of rightwisnesse,
Trewe of his word, sobre, pitous, and free,
Clene of his goste, and loved besinesse,
Ageinst the vyce of slouthe, in honestee;
And, but his heir love vertu, as dide he,
He is noght gentil, thogh he riche seme,
Al were he mytre, croune, or diademe.

Vyce may wel be heir to old richesse;
But ther may no man, as men may wel see,
Bequethe his heir his vertuous noblesse
That is appropred unto no degree,
But to the firste fader in magestee,
That maketh him his heir, that can him queme,
Al were he mytre, croune, or diademe.

XV. LAK OF STEDFASTNESSE

Balade

Som tyme this world was so stedfast and stable,
That mannes word was obligacioun,
And now hit is so fals and deceivable,
That word and deed, as in conclusioun,
Ben no-thing lyk, for turned up so doun
Is al this world for mede and wilfulnesse,
That al is lost for lak of stedfastnesse.

What maketh this world to be so variable,
But lust that folk have in dissensioun?
Among us now a man is holde unable,
But-if he can, by som collusioun,
Don his neighbour wrong or oppressioun.
What causeth this, but wilful wrecchednesse,
That al is lost, for lak of stedfastnesse?

Trouthe is put doun, resoun is holden fable;
Vertu hath now no dominacioun,
Pitee exyled, no man is merciable.
Through covetyse is blent discrecioun;
The world hath mad a permutacioun
Fro right to wrong, fro trouthe to fikelnesse,
That al is lost, for lak of stedfastnesse.

Lenvoy to King Richard

O prince, desyre to be honourable,
Cherish thy folk and hate extorcioun!
Suffre no thing, that may be reprevable
To thyn estat, don in thy regioun.
Shew forth thy swerd of castigacioun,
Dred God, do law, love trouthe and worthinesse,
And wed thy folk agein to stedfastnesse.

Explicit.

XVI. LENVOY DE CHAUCER A SCOGAN

To-broken been the statuts hye in hevene
That creat were eternally to dure,
Sith that I see the brighte goddes sevene
Mow wepe and wayle, and passioun endure,
As may in erthe a mortal creature.
Allas, fro whennes may this thing procede?
Of whiche errour I deye almost for drede.

By worde eterne whylom was hit shape
That fro the fifte cercle, in no manere,
Ne mighte a drope of teres doun escape.
But now so wepeth Venus in hir spere,
That with hir teres she wol drenche us here.
Allas, Scogan! this is for thyn offence!
Thou causest this deluge of pestilence.

Hast thou not seyd, in blaspheme of this goddes,
Through pryde, or through thy grete rakelnesse,
Swich thing as in the lawe of love forbode is?
That, for thy lady saw nat thy distresse,
Therfor thou yave hir up at Michelmesse!
Allas, Scogan! of olde folk ne yonge
Was never erst Scogan blamed for his tonge!

Thou drowe in scorn Cupyde eek to record
Of thilke rebel word that thou hast spoken,
For which he wol no lenger be thy lord.
And, Scogan, thogh his bowe be nat broken,
He wol nat with his arwes been y-wroken
On thee, ne me, ne noon of our figure;
We shul of him have neyther hurt ne cure.

Now certes, frend, I drede of thyn unhappe,
Lest for thy gilt the wreche of Love procede
On alle hem that ben hore and rounde of shape,
That ben so lykly folk in love to spede.
Than shul we for our labour han no mede;
But wel I wot, thou wilt answere and seye:
'Lo! olde Grisel list to ryme and pleye!'

Nay, Scogan, sey not so, for I m'excuse,
God help me so! in no rym, doutelees,
Ne thinke I never of slepe wak my muse,
That rusteth in my shethe stille in pees.
Whyl I was yong, I putte hir forth in prees,
But al shal passe that men prose or ryme;
Take every man his turn, as for his tyme.

ENVOY

Scogan, that knelest at the stremes heed[1]
Of grace, of alle honour and worthinesse,
In th'ende of which streme[2] I am dul as deed,
Forgete in solitarie wildernesse;
Yet, Scogan, thenke on Tullius kindenesse,
Minne thy frend, ther it may fructifye!
Far-wel, and lok thou never eft Love defye!

[1] I.e. Windesore. [2] I.e. Grenewich.

XVII. LENVOY DE CHAUCER A BUKTON

The counseil of Chaucer touching Mariage, which was sent to Bukton

My maister Bukton, whan of Criste our kinge
Was axed, what is trouthe or sothfastnesse,
He nat a word answerde to that axinge,
As who saith: 'no man is al trewe,' I gesse.
And therfor, thogh I highte to expresse
The sorwe and wo that is in mariage,
I dar not wryte of hit no wikkednesse,
Lest I my-self falle eft in swich dotage.

I wol nat seyn, how that hit is the cheyne
Of Sathanas, on which he gnaweth ever,
But I dar seyn, were he out of his peyne,
As by his wille, he wolde be bounde never.
But thilke doted fool that eft hath lever
Y-cheyned be than out of prisoun crepe,
God lete him never fro his wo dissever,
Ne no man him bewayle, though he wepe.

But yit, lest thou do worse, tak a wyf;
Bet is to wedde, than brenne in worse wyse.
But thou shalt have sorwe on thy flesh, thy lyf,
And been thy wyves thral, as seyn these wyse;
And if that holy writ may nat suffyse,
Experience shal thee teche, so may happe,
That thee were lever to be take in Fryse
Than eft to falle of wedding in the trappe.

ENVOY

This litel writ, proverbes, or figure
I sende you, tak kepe of hit, I rede:
Unwys is he that can no wele endure.
If thou be siker, put thee nat in drede.
The Wyf of Bathe I pray you that ye rede
Of this matere that we have on honde.
God graunte you your lyf frely to lede
In fredom; for ful hard is to be bonde.

Explicit.

XVIII. THE COMPLEYNT OF VENUS

I. (*The Lover's worthiness.*)

Ther nis so hy comfort to my plesaunce,
Whan that I am in any hevinesse,
As for to have leyser of remembraunce
Upon the manhod and the worthinesse,
Upon the trouthe, and on the stedfastnesse
Of him whos I am al, whyl I may dure;
Ther oghte blame me no creature,
For every wight preiseth his gentilesse.

In him is bountee, wisdom, governaunce
Wel more than any mannes wit can gesse;
For grace hath wold so ferforth him avaunce
That of knighthode he is parfit richesse.
Honour honoureth him for his noblesse;
Therto so wel hath formed him Nature,
That I am his for ever, I him assure,
For every wight preiseth his gentilesse.

And not-withstanding al his suffisaunce,
His gentil herte is of so greet humblesse
To me in worde, in werke, in contenaunce,
And me to serve is al his besinesse,
That I am set in verrey sikernesse.
Thus oghte I blesse wel myn aventure,
Sith that him list me serven and honoure;
For every wight preiseth his gentilesse.

II. (*Disquietude caused by Jealousy.*)

Now certes, Love, hit is right covenable
That men ful dere bye thy noble thing,
As wake a-bedde, and fasten at the table,
Weping to laughe, and singe in compleyning,
And doun to caste visage and loking,
Often to chaungen hewe and contenaunce,
Pleyne in sleping, and dremen at the daunce,
Al the revers of any glad feling.

Jalousye be hanged by a cable!
She wolde al knowe through hir espying;
Ther doth no wight no-thing so resonable,
That al nis harm in hir imagening.
Thus dere abought is lovë, in yeving,
Which ofte ye yiveth with-oute ordinaunce,
As sorow ynogh, and litel of plesaunce,
Al the revers of any glad feling.

A litel tyme his yift is agreable,
But ful encomberous is the using;
For sotel Jalousye, the deceyvable,
Ful often-tyme causeth destourbing.
Thus be we ever in drede and suffering,
In nouncerteyn we languisshe in penaunce,
And han ful often many an hard meschaunce,
Al the revers of any glad feling.

III. (*Satisfaction in Constancy.*)

But certes, Love, I sey nat in such wyse
That for t'escape out of your lace I mente;
For I so longe have been in your servyse
That for to lete of wol I never assente;
No force thogh Jalousye me tormente;
Suffyceth me to see him whan I may,
And therfore certes, to myn ending-day
To love him best ne shal I never repente.

And certes, Love, whan I me wel avyse
On any estat that man may represente,
Than have ye maked me, through your franchyse,
Chese the best that ever on erthe wente.
Now love wel, herte, and look thou never stente;
And let the jelous putte hit in assay
That, for no peyne wol I nat sey nay;
To love him best ne shal I never repente.

Herte, to thee hit oghte y-nogh suffyse
That Love so hy a grace to thee sente,
To chese the worthiest in alle wyse
And most agreable unto myn entente.
Seche no ferther, neyther wey ne wente,
Sith I have suffisaunce unto my pay.
Thus wol I ende this compleynt or lay;
To love him best ne shal I never repente.

LENVOY

Princess, receyveth this compleynt in gree,
Unto your excellent benignitee
Direct after my litel suffisaunce.
For eld, that in my spirit dulleth me,
Hath of endyting al the soteltee
Wel ny bereft out of my remembraunce;
And eek to me hit is a greet penaunce,
Sith rym in English hath swich scarsitee,
To folowe word by word the curiositee
Of Graunson, flour of hem that make in Fraunce.

XIX. THE COMPLEINT OF CHAUCER TO HIS EMPTY PURSE

To you, my purse, and to non other wight
Compleyne I, for ye be my lady dere!
I am so sory, now that ye be light;
For certes, but ye make me hevy chere,
Me were as leef be leyd up-on my bere;
For whiche un-to your mercy thus I crye:
Beth hevy ageyn, or elles mot I dye!

Now voucheth sauf this day, or hit be night,
That I of you the blisful soun may here,
Or see your colour lyk the sonne bright,
That of yelownesse hadde never pere.
Ye be my lyf, ye be myn hertes stere,
Quene of comfort and of good companye:
Beth hevy ageyn, or elles mot I dye!

Now purs, that be to me my lyves light,
And saveour, as doun in this worlde here,
Out of this toune help me through your might,
Sin that ye wole nat been my tresorere;
For I am shave as nye as any frere.
But yit I pray un-to your curtesye:
Beth hevy ageyn, or elles mot I dye!

Lenvoy de Chaucer

O conquerour of Brutes Albioun!
Which that by lyne and free electioun
Ben verray king, this song to you I sende;
And ye, that mowen al our harm amende,
Have minde up-on my supplicacioun!

XX. PROVERBS

Proverbe of Chaucer

I

What shul thise clothes many-fold,
Lo ! this hote somers day?—
After greet heet cometh cold ;
No man caste his pilche away.

II

Of al this world the wyde compas
Hit wol not in myn armes tweyne.
Who-so mochel wol embrace
Litel therof he shal distreyne.

XXI. WOMANLY NOBLESSE

[*This genuine poem was first printed in* June, 1894]

BALADE THAT CHAUCIER MADE

So hath my herte caught in rémembraunce
Your beautè hool, and stedfast governaunce,
  Your vertues allè, and your hy noblesse,
That you to serve is set al my plesaunce;
So wel me lykth your womanly contenaunce,
  Your fresshe fetures and your comlinesse,
  That, whyl I live, my herte to his maistresse,
You hath ful chose, in trew perséveraunce,
  Never to chaunge, for no maner distresse.

And sith I you shal do this observaunce
Al my lyf, withouten displesaunce,
  You for to serve with al my besinesse,
Taketh me, lady, in your obeisaunce
And have me somwhat in your souvenaunce.
  My woful herte suffreth greet duresse;
  And loke how humblely, with al simplesse,
My wil I cónforme to your ordenaunce,
  As you best list, my peynes to redresse.

Considring eek how I hange in balaunce
In your servycè; swich, lo! is my chaunce,
  Abyding grace, whan that your gentilnesse
Of my gret wo list doon allegeaunce,
And with your pitè me som wyse avaunce,

In ful rebating of my hevinesse ;
And think resóun, that wommanly noblesse
Shuld nat desyre for to doon outrance
Ther-as she findeth noon unbuxumnesse.

LENVOYE

Auctour of norture, lady of plesaunce,
Soveraine of beautè, flour of wommanhede,
Take ye non hede unto myn ignoraunce,
But this receyveth of your goodlihede,
Thinking that I have caught in remembraunce
Your beautè hool, your stedfast governaunce.

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